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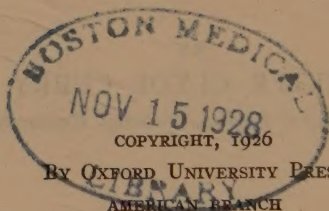


CHAUCER  
AND THE  
MEDIAEVAL SCIENCES

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And out of olde bokes, in good feith,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

NEW YORK  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMERICAN BRANCH: 35 WEST 32ND STREET  
LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE & BOMBAY  
1926



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*To*

MY FATHER AND MOTHER



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## INTRODUCTION

THIS volume is the result of an attempt to follow Geoffrey Chaucer in his studies of the mediaeval sciences and to indicate with what degree of success he has employed scientific materials in the creation of his poetical works. My researches have been in the nature of delightful but perplexing adventures. When, some eight years ago, I began an investigation of natural and celestial physiognomy, metoposcopy, geomancy, alchemy, mediaeval medicine, and the science of dreams, together with astrology, upon which all these are based, it was with the general purpose of reproducing, if possible, a sort of fourteenth century scientific background, against which certain stories and characters created by the poet might with advantage be thrown into strong relief. The execution of this aim has necessitated a consideration of Chaucer's personal attitude toward these branches of learning, his more or less accurate knowledge of the philosophy underlying them, and his relation of scientific principles to artistic production. Since poetry and science are now supposed to be antithetical and mutually exclusive, it has been difficult to conceive that one of the major English poets ever exercised his mind to any remarkable extent in the realm of scientific theory and abstraction; and that he should have been impressed to the point of taking seriously—at least for artistic purposes—these monstrosities of error, now seems almost unbelievable. Yet such appears to have been the case. The problems

arising in these studies may be simplified, however, by the establishing of a convenient perspective from which fourteenth century thought and life may be viewed and by the observation of a proper subordination of elements.

It must be remembered that Chaucer was in his poetical works first an artist and secondarily a philosopher or a scientist. Though he no doubt thought philosophically and satisfied an intense curiosity regarding the sciences of his time, he, like every other great poet, was concerned with the concrete rather than with the abstract. Apparently caring but little for the spirit of beauty and knowing next to nothing about any theory of esthetics, he was nevertheless passionately aroused in the presence of beautiful objects — fresh May flowers, busy larks singing salutations to the rising sun, stars following their prescribed courses, or dew-drops sparkling upon the grass. He was not greatly affected by the joys or sorrows of humanity in general, but he seems to have been profoundly touched by the experiences of particular persons whom he created — the death of Arcite, the despair of Troilus, the wanderings of Constance, the advancing age of the Wife of Bath. His poetical world was a world of concrete perceptions filled with a variety of individual human beings, whose characters and personalities, observed as acting or reacting in specific environments, constituted the materials with which he worked. And all the elements which he employed in his creations were carefully subordinated to one outstanding purpose, the concrete representation of life.

But not even Chaucer could conceive his characters and body them forth in a vacuum. Though most of his

people are in one sense universal, still they are products of a certain age; their modes of thought, their faiths, superstitions, ambitions, prejudices, and emotional reactions are human but definitely mediaeval. Troilus and Criseyde are among the world's great lovers, but their code of morals was that embodied in the laws of Courtly Love; the Knight is a man of truth and honor, but his ideals belonged to the age of chivalry; Theseus is a wise man, but his philosophy was that of Boethius. Chaucer's poetical and dramatic conceptions were inevitably determined in some measure by the mediaeval outlook upon life, and his artistic execution of them was consummated with a fourteenth century audience in mind. Consequently, if the modern reader would understand Chaucer's work at its best, he must learn to think in terms of mediaeval customs and manners, mediaeval philosophy, religion, and science; these are the outward trappings of an inward reality. Although *what* men in any age believe or hold to be true is *per se* of no great consequence ultimately — customs and manners change from year to year, moral standards alter with every generation, philosophical ideals and religious beliefs are continually discarded to be replaced by others, and truth seems to masquerade in a multitude of often fantastic shapes — still the earnest student of human nature must recognize that only through a study of these manifestations can he approach the soul of an age or understand the heroic human spirit in its search after truth. One may hold no brief now for either the truth or falsity of mediaeval alchemy or geomancy or chiromancy, or for the philosophy of Boethius, but the implications inherent

in these activities regarding the mediaeval mind are startling and significant. For often the reason *why* men believe so-and-so and the effects of a particular manner of thinking upon their characters may be of supreme importance.

Curiously enough your literary artist in any age, standing in the midst of contemporary influences and participating in the flux and flow of social, political, moral, and religious ideals, seems to possess a sort of dual personality. On the one hand, as a human being he is inescapably a part of the society in which he lives, and as such he may be touched by the heat of controversy or the joy of scientific discovery, be subject to the demoralizing or happy effects of his own actions, or be comforted in a perhaps disorganized life by philosophy or inspired by a religious zeal. In all things he reacts, like other men, to the multifarious stimuli of his environment. On the other hand, as artist — particularly if he be endowed with a dramatic instinct — he seems to withdraw himself from life and to view it objectively and from a distance as a kind of marvellous spectacle, highly colored or drab, complex or simple, joyous or tragic as the case may be. In a sense he appears to mirror nature and to reflect men and women as he observes them acting their respective rôles in familiar situations. But in reality he accomplishes more than that. He does not merely represent by description actual historical persons with whom he may have been acquainted; his world is not merely a facsimile or photograph of the phenomenal world of his experience. Your sincere artist — something like the Boethian God — conceives a completely



new universe of his own, a poetical world peopled with men and women — distinct personalities in their own right — who seem to act after the manner of human beings in real life. But in order to realize his conceptions and accomplish his designs, he is compelled to employ those actual life-materials with which his observation and experience have made him most familiar. In passing from the phenomenal world into the realm of art, however, these materials suffer an inexplicable sea-change; though they may seem still to be informed with the appearance and vitality of life, they are nevertheless transformed and fused by the creative imagination and absorbed into the original conception of the artist. But he stands completely outside his creation, permitting his world to proceed without intruding his own personal beliefs or doubts or hopes or fears. Chaucer was, presumably, such an artist.

It is, therefore, probably both a futile and a useless procedure — except for the biographer — to attempt to reconstruct, from a study of his poetical works, Chaucer's personal attitude toward the mediaeval sciences. Did he believe in astrology, or in alchemy, or in astrological medicine? The answers to all such questions as this affect only indirectly our main problem, which is to determine how and to what extent he made use of scientific material in the creation of his works of art. His primary purpose was evidently to create characters acting in stories before a specific audience whose beliefs and prejudices were known; and as artist, with his personal attitudes carefully concealed, he permitted his people to discuss whatever subjects they liked and to express what-

ever conclusions they pleased. The Franklin's strictures upon natural magic cannot be said to reflect Chaucer's opinion; the Canon's Yoeman's complete disgust with the practices of alchemists need not necessarily indicate Chaucer's attitude toward that science. If he chose to employ physiognomical principles in the presentation of some of his characters, the main question is not whether he himself believed in physiognomy but whether his use of it gave greater verisimilitude to the characters in the eyes of his audience; if he motivated two narratives by referring the action to planetary influences, the principal inquiry concerns itself not with the poet's faith in astrology but with the results of his innovations upon the technique of the stories. No one need expect to find that Chaucer has gone about elaborating his own scientific — or, for that matter, his philosophical or religious — creed in his later poetry; it is no part of a mature artist's prerogative to raise or to settle disputes in the realm of science. He probably looked upon astrology and metoposcopy and all the other sciences as just so much crude material, parts of which might be employed to advantage in furthering his creative designs.

To the twentieth century reader and critic, therefore, Chaucer's use of the mediaeval sciences presents an exceedingly difficult problem of complicated aspect. Unwary students of his work are likely to conclude at first — or indeed after long investigation — that an erudite and somewhat pedantic poet, fond of digression and display of learning for their own sake, has at times marred an otherwise artistic poem by the introduction of unassimilated fragments of scientific lore. Editors of

definitive editions — and following them the critics — interested principally in determining his indebtedness to this or that primary source and in locating the origin of certain interpolations, sometimes leave the impression that the finished work is little more than a mosaic of jarring elements. Compilers of selections from Chaucer, unable to reconcile these independent additions with their preconceived ideas of unity or unwilling to grant him the privilege of exercising an enlightened judgment in matters of artistic import, frequently take the unwarranted liberty of omitting such passages altogether. In both cases violence is done to Chaucer's work. If in the prosecution of his larger purpose he merely indicated to his fourteenth century audience that the Reeve was a choleric man, it was neither more reasonable nor more necessary for him to enter upon a full discussion of the four humours — their origin in the four elements, their natures, mixtures and action in the human body, their relation to complexions and dispositions, and his estimate of their validity as an explanation of observed phenomena — than it is for a present-day poet, who may wish to employ the term *Paleozoic Epoch*, to stop the progress of his poem and explain the whole system of modern geology and attach his "attitude" toward it. If he indicated that the Wife of Bath's character was in part determined by the conjunction of Mars and Venus in Taurus and that her "marks" were significant, it was no more expedient for him to present the horoscope with full interpretation and to explain in detail the principles of metoposcopy — together with his personal approval or disapproval — than it is now for the literary

artist, who may chance to refer to the Missing Link, to launch forth upon a résumé of the theory of evolution and to intrude a personal faith. He has permitted Chauntecleer and Pertelote to reveal their characters in a short controversy over two types of dreams; but it would have been as unseemly, and as unnecessary then, for him to classify all dreams according to their origin and with respect to their validity as harbingers of coming events as it would be now for a poet who may speak of "suppressed complexes" to load his poem with a full discussion of Freudian psychology. Certain passages in Chaucer's work, which may seem to be more or less disconnected fragments torn at random from some ancient scientific treatise and thrust into the smooth flow of a story, often represent in reality the most careful selection of pertinent details from a well-known body of universally accepted scientific principles. These details, when transferred back to their proper setting and viewed as integral parts of a system, are usually found to be in strict accord with the best scientific thought of the time; and when correctly correlated with the literary *milieu* in which the poet has placed them, they are observed to be fully assimilated and, therefore, absolutely essential to the finished work of art. The remarkable thing is that a mediaeval writer should have exercised such admirable restraint and such discriminating judgment in the employment of these materials.

Consequently, if the modern reader — with his mind centered upon "truths" about molecules, and electrons, and leucocytes, and relativity, and bacteria — is to secure the full flavor of Chaucer's work, he must reconstruct,

or at least have sketched for him, whole systems of these despised pseudo-sciences. While literary critics have been profitably busy for centuries reproducing fourteenth century religious and philosophical thought, attempting to revivify fourteenth century social customs and literary manners, they have, for the most part, passed over the sciences of the Middle Ages as being outworn or perhaps as being couched in a meaningless jargon, assuming presumably — being touched by the arrogance of the modern scientific spirit — that a revival of erroneous beliefs of a dark age could be of no service in the interpretation of a literary artist of that time. The omission has been particularly unfortunate, it seems to me. The mediaeval sciences, however ludicrously inadequate they now seem to have been, were doubtless as significant to the people of the fourteenth century as accepted principles of to-day are to us — and as powerful in helping to shape and mould character. Hence they must have exerted no little influence upon the formation of Chaucer's artistic ideas. He has merely indicated, for example, that the fortunes of Palamon and Arcite were subject in large measure to the conflicting influences of Mars and Saturn, that the tragic suffering of Constance was brought upon her by the conjunction of Mars and Luna in Scorpio, and that the character of Hypermnestra was determined by the planets Venus and Jupiter; but because the mystery of astral influences has been long forgotten, it now becomes necessary to set forth, more or less completely, the philosophical principles underlying the whole system of mediaeval astrology and to discuss in detail the natures of specific planets, their hours and



positions of greatest strength and weakness, and their destinal power in the affairs of men. He has suggested that the Doctor of Physic was a good practical and theoretical physician who understood the origin of diseases in combinations of hot, cold, moist, and dry and who knew the supreme science of image-making; but since these curious ideas have become completely obsolete, it now seems necessary to revive the whole "occult philosophy of medicine," which deals with the ultimate causes and cures of diseases emanating from the stars, the immediate relation of the four elements to the planets, on the one hand, and to the humours and complexions of the human body, on the other, and the crowning marvel of the entire system, astrological amulets and charms. Regarding Arcite's illness we are informed that the virtue expulsive, or animal, could not expel the poison from that virtue which was called natural; but since nobody remembers how in olden times the Reasonable Human Soul was supposed to get its work done in the human body, it now seems imperative that the Soul's activities, as it expresses itself through the mediate functioning of the *virtus naturalis*, the *virtus animalis*, and the *virtus spiritualis*, should be described and that the interrelations and interactions of these forces should be explained in some detail. Pertelote says that dreams are caused by the presence of too much cholera in the blood and Chauntecleer insists that *his* dream of last night was a vision; but because ancient dream-lore has been entirely superseded, one is compelled now to review mediaeval psychology and to analyze dreams into three classes, the *somnium naturale*,

*somnium animale*, and the *somnium coeleste*. And a passing reference to "tertian fever" necessitates a classification of fever as *aegritudinis* or *putredinis*, the latter being further divided into *tertiana*, *quartana*, *quotidiana*, and *causon*, all of which are the result of corrupted humours in the body. Thus, for a just understanding of the poet's ultimate purpose in his use of scientific fragments, a more or less complete view of the systems from which he took his materials is essential.

But the outlining of scientific systems of the Middle Ages, with the idea of establishing Chaucer's sources, raises a problem of unusual complexion. The critic must always find it comparatively easy to determine the extent to which the poet may have drawn upon any given literary productions, because these have the distinguishing stamp of authorship and personality upon them; by comparing the *Knight's Tale*, for example, with Boccaccio's *Teseide* one may come to fairly definite conclusions regarding Chaucer's borrowing from the Italian's work. But the accepted principles of mediaeval science are not found exclusively in the treatises of any single writer; they are generally discovered to have been held by many men in various countries through centuries. Bernard of Gordon, for example, had little to add to Galen's theory of the four humours in the body, which was accepted, restated, and elaborated by all reputable physicians down at least to 1400. When Chaucer, therefore, found it convenient to base a medical diagnosis upon the theory, it is manifestly impossible to determine whether he read Galen or Constantinus Africanus or Gilbertus Anglicus, or a host of others. If he chose to

present on various occasions questions involving the classification and validity of dreams, one cannot be sure whether he obtained his information from contemporary medical men or from the natural philosophers or from the theologians, all of whom were in agreement on fundamentals. He undoubtedly delved extensively in astrology and elaborated astrological ideas in his poems, but it would be extremely precarious to maintain conclusively that he drew upon the Arabians or the Spanish translators or upon any particular copier of his own time, all of whom were practically at one upon the essential laws. Consequently I have made no effort whatever to establish definite sources for the allusions to science found in Chaucer's poetical works. It has seemed to me rather a more reasonable and a more profitable procedure to review the generally accepted conclusions of the wise ones through sometimes ten or twelve centuries, and to demonstrate that the highly educated English poet was, as artist handling crude materials, in accord usually with the best scientific opinion of his age.

Any correct estimate of Chaucer's knowledge of the mediaeval sciences, therefore, must be arrived at largely by inference. To note merely that he probably read Galen or Ptolemy or Constantinus Africanus, because some of his allusions may be traced to the works of these writers, is entirely misleading; quite frequently his employment of a single and apparently casual reference to one of the sciences presupposes a thorough acquaintance with a complete scientific system, the full influence of which he has brought to bear upon a given situation. Furnishing the Wife of Bath with a horoscope, for ex-

ample, may seem a simple and indeed a more or less unimportant thing for him to have done; but when her constellation is fully interpreted and we come to understand that her complexities of character and vicissitudes of fortune seem to have been determined largely by astral influences, it appears that the poet must have had deep insight into the mysteries of genethliac astrology and metoposcopy. The astrological references in the *Knight's Tale* compass less than one hundred and twenty-five lines, but through them he has fashioned an occult story of conflicting planetary influences and has thus spread back of a human narrative the destinal power of the stars. Such admirable economy of details implies an accurate knowledge of the whole structure of judicial and horary astrology. From his diagnosis of the Summoner's malady and his suggestions regarding the Doctor's erudition the inference may be drawn that he understood perfectly the philosophy of mediaeval medicine and was familiar with the theory and practice of it. Moreover, the exact correspondence between the characters and physical appearances of certain Canterbury Pilgrims indicates that he had the principles of natural and celestial physiognomy at his finger-tips. And his constant preoccupation with visions that come to men waking or asleep and his enumeration of all the types mentioned by wise men of the time suggests that he knew all there was to be known about dreams and their ways.

But regarding his knowledge of alchemical principles I have been able to form no opinion whatever. It may be, as some critics have held, that the *Canon's Yeoman's*

*Tale* is a violent satire inspired by personal irritation and directed against alchemy and alchemists. Or, knowing the famous "secret" himself and sympathizing with the true science, he perhaps wrote the *Tale* as a warning to the public against false practitioners and added the correct formula for multiplying in order that honest and serious searchers after truth might be encouraged.\* Both of these conjectures, however, are probably beside the mark; at least positive evidence in support of them is wanting. Chaucer was no more a pamphleteer than an exponent of pure science; he was a literary artist, creating characters and setting them forth by means of whatever materials his age afforded. His interest was evidently centered in the personality of the Canon's Yoeman, one of the most dramatically conceived and delightfully presented ignoramuses in the course of English literature. Chaucer stands aside while the stupid fellow, sweating profusely and greatly flustered, vents his spleen upon his former master and inducts the Canterbury Pilgrims into the mysteries of alchemical practices. He has a fly-paper mind which collects everything and understands nothing — except that an explosion usually marks the end of the experiment. But enjoying for once the center of the stage and finding his hearers attentive, he pours forth a flood of marvellous alchemical terms — names of substances, processes, and implements mixed in a fine confusion without rime or reason — which he has heard during his late apprenticeship. He suspects that his former master is a fraud, like

\* S. F. Damon, "Chaucer and Alchemy," *PMLA.*, XXXIX, 782 ff.



the alchemist in the *Tale*, but he is never quite certain; being entirely ignorant of the significance of processes and terms with which he is superficially familiar, he clings almost involuntarily to the belief that there may be something in the practice after all. Consequently, near the end of the story, he repeats from memory a formula from Arnold of the New Town and garbles phrases from a man called Senior, to the effect that no philosopher ever writes the great secret in a book and that, indeed, God does not reveal it at all except to a few chosen ones. In that case, being but an uneducated, superstitious man and never having had any success at making gold anyway, he resolves to give up multiplying forever. So Chaucer has created the Canon's Yoeman, but there is no indication whatever that he himself either approved or condemned alchemy or alchemists. One may suspect, however, that his reading in alchemical literature must have been wide — the variety and range of terms occurring in the Yoeman's list are remarkable — but whether he read intelligently or was an initiate in the great secret must remain a mystery. He may or may not have been a good alchemist; he was certainly the conscious artist when using alchemical material.

In conclusion, it must be observed that in this book the emphasis placed upon Chaucer's relation to the mediaeval sciences should not be taken to indicate in any way the comparative importance of scientific influences upon the poet. Among all the other powerful influences which must have thronged upon him — social, literary, philosophical, religious — that of the mediaeval sciences

was probably least effective in helping to produce the finished writer. But that they contributed in some measure to the moulding of his artistic ideas cannot be doubted. If my revival of these fourteenth century scientific principles makes it possible for a twentieth century audience to read Chaucer's poetical works with clearer understanding and with greater appreciation, in ever so small a degree, I shall be satisfied.

CHAUCER AND THE MEDIAEVAL  
SCIENCES



CHAPTER ONE

THE DOCTOR OF PHYSIC AND  
MEDIAEVAL MEDICINE

COMMENTATORS are happily agreed, it would seem, that the Doctor of Physic is possessed of sufficient erudition and experience to rank him among the foremost theoretical and practising physicians of his time. Indeed, he has no peer when it comes to *speaking* of physic and even of surgery. He has “dronkyn of that swete drynke of Astronome” so deeply that he is enabled to diagnose without fault any malady with respect to both the ultimate or primary causes emanating from the stars and the immediate causes residing in the various compoundings of hot, cold, moist, and dry humours in the blood. And having located the seat of trouble in the human system, he skilfully employs the principles of natural magic in the creation of appropriate astrological images and in the compounding of medicines for the purpose of effecting cures. He is favored with an extraordinarily wide acquaintance with the works of ancient and mediaeval authors upon medicine, having the distinction of being, perhaps, the only physician who has ever perused the writings of that mythical founder of medicine, Esculapius. For years he and his apothecaries have worked together in brotherly fashion—to their mutual benefit—against the ravages of the Black Death and other diseases; and such have been his thrift and temperance



that he is blessed with superior physical comforts in the way of good health and distinctive wearing apparel. His thinking is but little on the Bible.<sup>1</sup> It has seemed to me that possibly Skeat, Morris, and others<sup>2</sup> have not done justice quite to his learning and to the subtlety with which his character is drawn. Perhaps it might be well to reconsider, in the light of mediaeval medical lore and contemporary opinion upon physicians in general, the evidence which Chaucer presents in support of this particular Doctor's claim to fame and to estimate the art with which the poet has created his character.

As to education, no one must discredit the Doctor of Physic if he seems to fail in measuring up to the high standard set by Isidore Hispalensis (600 A.D.). "It is sometimes asked," says Isidore, "why the art of medicine is not included among the other liberal arts. It is because they deal with single causes, but medicine with all. For a medical man should know the *ars grammatica*, that he may be able to understand and expound that which he reads; and the *ars rhetorica*, that he may be able to support with sound arguments the matters with which he deals; and also the *ars dialectica*, so that by the exercise of reason he may investigate the causes of sickness for the purpose of cure. So too he should know the *ars arithmetica*, so as to calculate the times (of fever) and its periods; and he should be acquainted with the *ars geometrica*, so that he may teach what every man ought to consider with regard to different districts and the lie of different places. Moreover, he must know something of music, for many things may be done for the sick by means of this art . . . Asclepiades restored a madman to

his former health by means of a concord of sounds. Lastly let him have a knowledge of astronomy, by means of which he may understand the calculation of the stars and the changes of the seasons. For a physician says, our bodies are affected by their qualities, and therefore medicine is called a second philosophy; for either art arrogates to itself the whole man, since by the one the soul and by the other the body is cured.”<sup>3</sup> But the good Doctor’s success indicates that he employs at least the principles of all these arts — with the possible exception of music — whether he has studied them formally or not; he reads with intelligence, he has great facility in expression, he is an excellent diagnostician, his *Tale* embodies his evident studies in the *ars rhetorica* and he knows astronomy (astrology). He is proficient in both theory and practice, the two main branches into which mediaeval medicine is usually divided.

John of Salisbury might have considered him of no more importance professionally than some other bragging, mediaeval physicians. “The theoretical physicians do what concerns them,” says the author of *Polycraticus*, “and for love of you will go even further. You can get from them information as to the nature and causes of particular phenomena, they are judges of health, of sickness, and of the mean estate. Health, so far as words go, they provide and preserve, and as for the mean estate they bid one incline in the direction of health. Of sickness they foresee and declare the causes, and lay down its beginning, its continuance, and its decline. What more shall we say? When I hear them talk, I fancy that they can raise the dead and are in no way inferior

to either Esculapius or Mercury. . . . Again, what shall I say about the practising physicians? God forbid that I should say anything bad about them! since for my sins I fall only too often into their hands. They should rather be soothed by politeness than angered by words, and I do not wish that they should treat me hardly, nor could I endure all the evils about which they constantly talk. I would rather say with blessed Solomon: All medicine is from the Lord, and he that is wise will not despise it." <sup>4</sup> But undoubtedly John of Burgundy would have applauded the union of theory and practice in Chaucer's Doctor, against whom his strictures upon certain improperly equipped practitioners in the time of the pestilences could not have been leveled. "Ther have bene many grete maistirs," complains John of Burgundy, "and ferre lernyd in theoric or speculation and groundly in sight of medecyne, but they bene litill proued in practik and therto allefully ignorant in the sience of Astronomy, the which science is in phisik wonder nedefull . . . for why astronomye and phisik rectifien yche other in effect and also that one science sheweth forthe many thynges hidde in the other. . . . And I 40 yere and more have oftyn tymes proued in practise that a medecyn gyven contrary to the constellacion all thogh hit were both wele compownyd or medled and ordynatly wrought after the science of phisik yet it wrought nowther aftur the purpose of the worcher nor to the profite of the patient. . . . Wherefore they that have not dronkyn of that swete drynke of Astronomye mowe putte to thise pestilentiall sores no perfite remedie, for bicause that they knowe not the cause and the qualitie of the siknesse they

may not hele it. . . . He that knowith not the cause hit is onpossible that he hele the sikenes. The comen-tour also *super secundum phisicorum* seith thus: A man knowith not a thing but if he knowe the cause both ferre and nygh. Sithen therfor the hevenly or firmamentall bodies bene of the first and primytif causes, it is behovefull to have knowlechyng of hem; for yf the first and primytif causes be onknownen, we may not come to know the causes secondary. Sithen therfor the first cause bryngeth in more plenteuously his effecte than doth the cause secondary . . . therfor it shewith wele that without Astronomy litill vayleth phisik, for many man is perissed in defawte of his counsellour.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a knowledge of astronomy is so absolutely essential in medical practice that Hippocrates is credited with having said, “The medical man, whatever else he may be, cannot be considered a perfect physician if he is ignorant of astronomy; no man ought to commit himself into his hands.”<sup>6</sup>

Since mediaeval medicine is grounded firmly upon the principles of astrology, it might be well to sketch briefly the rationale of celestial influences as they affect the healthy or diseased human body. For as Rhazes says, “Wise physicians are agreed that all things here below, air, water, the complexions, sickness, and so on, suffer change in accordance with the motions of the planets.”<sup>7</sup> First, it must be observed, in astro-medical lore the Zodiacal signs have certain “qualities” or “virtues” assigned to them: Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius are fiery; Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are earthy; Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius are airy; Cancer, Scorpio, and Pis-

ces are watery. Again, for example, Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn are called "movable" or "tortuous" signs, because in them are renewed the four principal complexions of all things, that is to say, hot and dry in Cancer, cold and dry in Libra, cold and moist in Capricorn; Taurus and the likewise following are called "fixed" signs, because in them the complexions are constant; Gemini and following are "common" signs, because in them the complexions decline. The planets, moreover, are diverse in their qualities or complexions, Saturn being cold and dry, Mars hot and dry, Jupiter and Venus hot and moist, Luna cold and moist, and so on. But so far as their "virtues" or influences are concerned the ultimate natures of planets depend largely upon their configuration in the various signs through which they revolve.<sup>8</sup>

From Aristotle on down, we must observe, wise men are agreed that the stars, incorruptible and voluntary in their movements—whether guided by celestial intelligences or not—are the "causes of generation and corruption in all inferior things," the artificers who use as tools the four terrestrial elements, earth, air, fire, and water. "Per coelum ergo," says Roger Bacon, "complexiones omnium rerum habentur. et non solum regiones diversificantur per coelum, sed res ejusdem regionis partes ejusdem rei, et non solum in generatione recta sed monstruosa, et peccatis ac erroribus naturae."<sup>9</sup> From the sky, therefore, come the influences which determine the fundamental "complexion" or physical constitution of the human body at conception and at birth; the configuration of certain stars is all powerful in controlling the

various proportions of elements which are compounded in its creation. Not only that, but the parts of the body are distributed severally among the signs of the Zodiac; <sup>10</sup> and every passing hour, which brings a change in the positions of stars in the signs, sees the human "complexion" governed by a new celestial influence. In the diagnosis of a malady, therefore, it is manifestly of prime importance that the physician should know something of the patient's nativity, i.e., the influence responsible for the given complexion, and that by observation of the present configuration of stars he should be able to determine how, why, and to what extent the proportions of original element-compounds have been upset or disordered. This, in brief, furnishes the basis of the "occult philosophy of medicine" so popular in the Middle Ages. To quote John of Burgundy again, "Since, therefore, the heavenly or firmamental bodies are the first and primitive causes (of disease), it is necessary to have knowledge of them; for if the first or primitive causes be unknown, we may not come to know the causes secondary." Chaucer's Doctor of Physic, well grounded in astronomy, is first of all a theoretical physician and accordingly an excellent diagnostician; he knows the cause of every malady, whether it be of a hot, cold, moist, or dry humour. This knowledge he doubtless gains from observation of the stars.

What of the causes secondary or immediate? And what of the qualifications of the practising physician? Skeat has already explained that the whole system of mediaeval medicine rests upon the teaching of Galen in respect to the relation of the bodily humours to sick-



ness and health. Galen and other physicians assume that there are four elements or simple bodies in creation, earth, fire, air, and water, which are thought to possess certain "qualities"; earth is cold and dry; fire, hot and dry; air, hot and moist; and water, cold and moist. Corresponding with these four elementary qualities are the four bodily humours, namely, melancholia, cholera, phlegm, and blood, generated in the brain, heart, liver, and stomach. And arising from the compounding of these humours in the body come the four complexions or temperaments of men, viz., the melancholic, the choleric, the phlegmatic, and the sanguine. The *melancholic man* is cold and dry, after the nature of earth; the *choleric man* is hot and dry, after the nature of fire; the *phlegmatic man* is cold and moist, after the nature of water; and the *sanguine man* is hot and moist, after the nature of air. In health there is a just proportion of qualities or humours mingled together in the human body; in sickness there is an excess of one or more qualities, according as the distemper is simple or compound.<sup>11</sup> It is, therefore, evidently impossible for the theoretical physician, however much of astrology he may know, to arrive at the complete diagnosis of a given disturbance in the body unless he is fully acquainted with the character and inter-actions of the four humours. In other words, he must recognise both the primitive and the immediate causes. Accordingly, Chaucer says that his Doctor of Physic knows not only the cause of every malady, whether it is from a compounding of hot, or cold, or moist, or dry, but also where it is generated and of what humour. Having determined this much, your practising

physician may find his way comparatively easy; he has only to prescribe remedies laid down in great detail in every medical treatise. As Chaucer says further of the Doctor:

He was a verrey parfit practisour:  
The cause y-knowe, and his harm the rote,  
Anon he yaf the seke man his bote.  
(*C. T.*, A, 422 ff.) <sup>12</sup>

Let us see in some detail how a mediaeval physician, by observing the course of the moon through the signs of the Zodiac, might prognosticate what diseases a man is likely to be subject to, what treatment to apply, how long the malady may be expected to continue, and whether the patient will recover or not. First, according to Galen,<sup>13</sup> by observing the position of Luna he may determine precisely from what humour or combination of humours the malady proceeds. For example, if Luna is in Cancer when the sickness begins and in conjunction with Saturn and Mars, the infirmity comes from a superabundance of black cholera; if Luna in quartile or sextile aspect with Saturn is discovered in Leo, the malady is caused by too much phlegm, but if in the same aspect with Mars, by too much blood; if Luna is in Gemini and crescent, the disease is from red cholera; if in Pisces and in quartile or septile aspect with Mars, from too much blood and cholera — and so on. Your wise physician may determine, moreover, the nature, location in the body, and duration of all diseases, and may apply specified remedies to each with confidence of success.

For example, if the patient should be taken sick when Luna is in Aries, conjoined with Mars and Sol, his affliction will be in the head or lungs on account of the sun's heat; he will suffer with raging fevers and will have a strong pulse. It is necessary in such a case to diminish blood in the veins (by cupping) and to administer cooling drinks and foods. If Luna is conjoined with Mars and Saturn in Aries, the patient will die in seven days when the moon comes into quartile aspect with Sol — that is, if Luna is crescent. (*Si non ab Astronomia nescis non poteris scire eius infirmitatem.*) When Luna in Aries is in oppositional or quartile aspect with Mars, the infirmity is *ex sanguine*; the patient then experiences heat and drought; he is unable to sleep at night and has a desire to drink wine or anything that is cooling. It is, therefore, necessary to diminish blood and to give medicines whose property is to produce cold and moisture. And if in this position Saturn aspects Luna and if no fortunate planet exerts its influence to the contrary, then the patient will die in about nine days after the malady began — that is, if Luna is progressive and crescent. When Luna in Leo is in quartile or sextile aspect with Saturn, the infirmity is *ex fleumate* and affects the head; but the patient will recover after Luna has passed through four signs. If, however, Luna in Leo is aspected by Mars *ex quarto vel sexto*, the disease comes from a superabundance of blood, which produces fevers; the patient must be given cool and dry drinks. He will escape after great depletion of energies if a fortunate planet can be found in good aspect; but if no good influence is felt, he will die

when Luna arrives opposite the position she was in when the illness began. Thus your mediaeval physician is provided with a definite system upon which he may base his prognosis, diagnosis, and practice in the treatment of diseases. He observes carefully the position of Luna at the hour when the sickness begins; he understands thoroughly the development of the disease by calculating hourly the changes in the influences from constellations; he knows precisely, therefore, at what hour the crisis will come; he administers hour by hour—or may change at any hour—the medicine or medicines which he feels would alleviate the sufferings of his patient or work a cure. In certain cases he may even prognosticate the death of the sick man. Such an uncanny knowledge and ability Chaucer ascribes to his Doctor of Physic:

For he was grounded in astronomye;  
He kepte his pacient a ful greet del  
In houres, by his magik naturel  
(*C. T.*, A, 414 ff.).

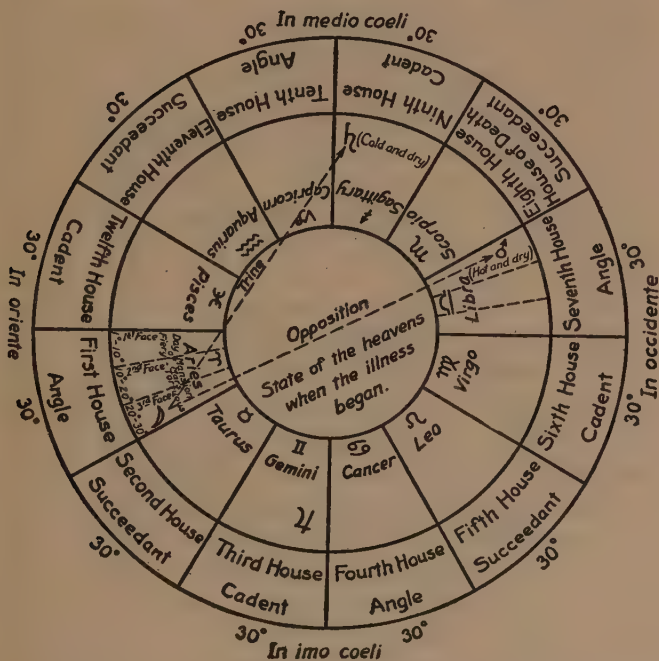
This business of keeping a patient “a ful greet del in houres” becomes further immensely complicated when it comes to administering medicines and performing surgical operations. Your mediaeval physician must understand that the four humours of the body fluctuate in volume and power according to the waxing and waning of the moon; when Luna is full, they are most strong and abundant; when she declines, they decrease. In the first and third quarter, the humours “withdraw from the interior to the exterior, just as a stream flows in its channel”; in the second and fourth quarters, “they re-

cede from the exterior to the interior.” (*Hoc est magna transmutatio et mirabilis*).<sup>14</sup> Generally speaking, consequently, the wise physician may upon occasion employ exterior evacuants such as phlebotomy in the first and third quarters of the moon, but in the second and fourth quarters he will use interior purgatives and laxatives.<sup>15</sup> He must observe, moreover, that humours have dominion variously in respective hours of the day: the first six hours of the natural day, i.e., after midnight, are hot and moist, and during that time blood is said to have dominion; the second six hours are hot and dry, and cholera is in power; the next six are cold and dry, and melancholia rules; the last six are cold and moist, and phlegm is supreme.<sup>16</sup> And finally, the practising physician will do well to remember that in each hour of the twenty-four in a day some particular planet is most powerful. The planet of the day, e.g., Sol on Sunday, is assigned the first (after sunrise), the eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-second hours, and to the other planets are given respective hours in the following order: Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars.<sup>17</sup> Understanding these mysteries, however, and recognising how and why each planet is responsible for a varied assortment of particular diseases,<sup>18</sup> the practitioner may proceed to elect propitious hours for the administering of medicines and the surgeon for his operations.

For example, let us postulate the simplest case imaginable. Suppose the physician is called to the bedside of his patient in the early morning hours of Sunday, and finds the poor man burning up with a fever of some description. Upon inquiry he finds, say, that the malady was

first felt nine days ago. If he is properly prepared for his business, his astrological calculations may show (see Plate I) that, when the illness began, Luna was near the end of her first quarter and situated in the third "face"

PLATE I



of Aries (a fiery, tortuous sign in which are renewed the qualities, cold and moist), in oppositional aspect with Mars (hot and dry), and in, say, trine aspect with Saturn (cold and dry). He will conclude from the observation



and from the symptoms that his patient suffers from that type of fever called "continuous," which is caused from the corruption of blood in the veins.<sup>19</sup> He is doubtless horrified to discover upon present observation — nine days

PLATE II



after the sickness began — that Luna is in her third quarter (indicating that humours are abundant and strong), that the hour comes within the first six of the natural day (in which blood has dominion), that Aries

(one of the "mansions" of Mars) is in the ascendancy and therefore powerful, and that Mars (lord of the ascendent) has progressed a single day's journey in the eighth "house" of the astrological figure (the house of death). This is one of the most malignant of planetary configurations;<sup>20</sup> not even the beneficent Jupiter situated in Gemini can make himself felt (see Plate II). The doctor may try letting blood, since the corrupted humours are now "exterior" and the root of the malady may be reached most directly in that manner, but he will find the accumulated influences of the stars too strong to be overcome. The patient surely dies — in all likelihood precisely one hour before sunrise (the astrological "hour" of Mars, lord of the ascendent),<sup>21</sup> on this Sunday (the first "hour" of which is attributed to Sol), nine days after the illness began.<sup>22</sup>

Let us suppose, however, that the physician is called in two days earlier, in the early morning hours of Friday, just *seven* days after the malady's beginning (see Plate III). In that event the patient stands a good chance of recovery. For Luna (the moist and cold planet, ruler of phlegm) is found to have progressed (during the seven days) through exactly three signs and to be now situated in the third face of Cancer (a watery sign), her only "mansion," in which she is most powerful in producing comforting cold and moist humours. Her kindly influence is further increased by virtue of her position in an "angle," the most favorable of the three locations, angle, succedant, and cadent.<sup>23</sup> On Friday, moreover, Mars is found to be situated in the seventh house (where he is weakened) and falling from the sign

Libra, one of his positions of least influence (being situated, as it is, opposite his mansion, Aries).<sup>24</sup> And on Friday, finally, the most beneficent of all planets, Jupiter, situated in Gemini and in strong oppositional aspect with

## PLATE III



Saturn in Sagittarius effectively neutralises the malignancy of this greater infortune.<sup>25</sup> Thus on Friday Saturn is rendered helpless, Mars is weakened by reason of his position in an unfavorable sign and of his being cadent from an angle, and Luna, not strongly aspected by

any wicked planet and rejoicing in her place of greatest dignity, is left free to exert all her beneficent influence upon the feverish patient. But this happy configuration of stars can continue for only one day or less; it behooves the physician to bestir himself. During the first six hours of the natural day (when blood is in the ascendancy) he must bleed the patient; but during the remainder of the day, since Luna is in her second quarter and the humours are "interior," he must have recourse to purgatives and digesters of hot and dry humours and to cold and moist drinks. The most dangerous hours of Friday are the fourth and eleventh after sunrise (the "hours" of Saturn) and the sixth and thirteenth ("hours" of Mars); at these hours he should give digesters of melancholia (ruled by Saturn) and of cholera (ruled by Mars).<sup>26</sup> The most favorable hours are the fifth and twelfth ("hours" of Jupiter) and the third, tenth, and seventeenth ("hours" of Luna); during these hours the accomplished physician may give cold and moist drinks in abundance and apply "comforters" of phlegm. The patient's continuous fever should be completely broken by the afternoon of Friday, some time during the last six hours of the natural day (when phlegm is in the ascendancy), probably at the tenth "unequal hour" or perhaps at the seventeenth (the hours when Luna is most powerful). And his recovery is assured if, upon inquiry concerning his nativity, it is found that his complexion is phlegmatic. And if your practising physician is exceptionally wise, he will concentrate and perpetuate the beneficent influences of the above constellation in an astrological image.

Chaucer's Doctor of Physic at least, knowing that the science of images is the very cream of all the other sciences and of philosophy, has prepared himself to "fortunen the ascendent of his images for his pacient." The making of images is so important that Aristotle is reported to have said: "He who reads philosophy, geometry, and all the other sciences and knows nothing of astronomy occupies himself in vain, for more worthy than geometry and higher than philosophy is the science of images."<sup>27</sup> Precisely what does it mean to "fortunen" (or to "infortunen") the ascendent of an image?<sup>28</sup> Skeat's description of the Doctor's activities in this respect is perhaps not well advised: "He knew well how to choose a fortunate ascendent for treating images."<sup>29</sup> The science of image-making is the ultimate step in the sciences of nativities and elections. We have seen already how the influence of a constellation—the aggregate of certain planetary and sign qualities—so impresses itself upon the elements compounded in the body of a man at birth that there is produced a just equilibrium of qualities (or humours) which determines the fundamental complexion of the native. We have observed also how the constantly changing face of the heavens sometimes disturbs the right proportion of the bodily qualities (causing a superabundance of one or more humours), and how diseases, produced by such planetary influences, must be treated at specified hours when the stars are propitious. And, now, we must note especially that *all things* of a material nature which are made or created by the hands of men receive the impress of the constellation which reigns at the instant when they are formed,

and that the impress of this celestial energy is never lost so long as the objects are not corrupted or destroyed.<sup>30</sup> This is particularly true of astrological images, formed with or without characters, figures, or incantations; they receive and store up the tremendous energy of either beneficent or malignant constellations, which the clever practitioner of natural magic may use at will to work health or sickness or death here below. "Because it is difficult to comprehend the truth about celestial things," says Roger Bacon, "there is found among many men great error in the practice of this science; and they are few who know how to employ it usefully and with justice."<sup>31</sup>

In the making of images, however, any natural philosopher must give especial attention to the ascendent (its favorable or unfavorable qualities in the given instance), to the good or bad position of Luna in relation to other planets, to the location of the lord of the ascendent, and to the favorable or unfavorable position of the lord of the house of death. Thebit ibn Corat, probably the most celebrated of all the image-makers ("inter omnes Christianos summus philosophus,"<sup>32</sup> Bacon), gives explicit directions for the making of seven useful and marvellous images.<sup>33</sup> For example, if you want to drive out scorpions from a place, says he in effect, begin your operations when Scorpio is in the ascendent. Make an image of a scorpion out of copper or tin or silver, and engrave above the image the names of the ascendent, of the lord of the ascendent, of the lord of the day-hour, and of the moon (Luna should be in Scorpio). And you shall place in a fortunate position (*fortunabis*) the lord



of the house of death or join him in quartile or sextile aspect with one of the infortunes, Saturn or Mars. Then bury the image with the head downwards and say these words, *Haec est sepultura illius, vel speciei illius, ut non intret illum, vel illum locum.* And the scorpions will disappear! Similarly, if you wish to work the destruction of a whole region, make an image under the ascendent of this region. Then you shall place in a fortunate position (*fortunabis*) the lord of the house of death and in an unfortunate position (*infortunabis*) the lord of the ascendent, and Luna, and the lord of the mansion of Luna, and the lord of the house of the ascendent. Bury the image so engraved in the midst of the region, and you will see wonderful results.

Arnoldus de Villa Nova, moreover, relying apparently more upon incantation than upon astrology, gives directions for the creation of twelve medical seals of standard quality, so to speak, which correspond to the signs of the Zodiac <sup>34</sup> and which the physician may have ready prepared in cases of emergency. They are not made with special reference to any individual case; but if the physician is supplied with these images in the twelve signs, he is certain to have something in stock to meet the instant demand. For example, let us consider the Libra-image. Take the purest gold and melt it, says he in effect, and form it into a round seal; while you are making it, say these words: *Exurge Domine in statere, & exaudi vocem meam, qua clamaui ad te; miserere mei, & exaudi me,* and repeat the Psalm beginning, *Dominus illuminatio mea, &c.* Having made the seal so, you must put it away for awhile; afterwards when the Sun enters Libra,



Luna being situated in Capricorn or Aquarius, engrave on one side the figure of a man holding in his hands a balance and in the circumference, *Heli, Heli lama Sabatani, consummatum est*; on the other side engrave in the circumference, *Iesus Nazareus Rex Iudeorum*, and in the middle, *Michael, Mattheus*. This most sacred image is powerful against insidious demons on land and sea, against wind-storms and the inundations of water, and against all maladies which are produced *ex sanguine*. It is evident, therefore, that to "fortunen" the ascendent of an image signifies much more than "choosing a fortunate ascendent for the treatment of images"; it means also that the dealer in natural magic must fortune (i.e., place in a favorable position) both Luna and the lord of the ascendent, and infortune (place in unfavorable positions) the lord of the house of death and the malefic planets. And contrariwise, to infortune the ascendent of an image is to infortune Luna, and the lord of the ascendent, and the lords of the day and hour, and to fortune the lord of the house of death and the wicked planets. "And this is the supreme wisdom which the most high God wishes to disclose to His servants," concludes Thebit ibn Corat, "in order that His name may be honored, praised, and forever exalted world without end." <sup>85</sup>

No one must imagine, therefore, that Arnoldus de Villa Nova and Thebit ibn Corat are to be classed with necromancers and other exponents of black magic because they employ characters, incantations, and adjurations in the preparation of their astrological images. These dangerous-appearing accessories <sup>86</sup> to the valid science of

images may be defended upon two grounds. Roger Bacon finds that words are the natural instrument of the soul and that miracles have been performed through the use of them. "When words are uttered with deep thought and great desire and good intention and firm confidence, they have great virtue. For when these four qualities unite, the substance of the rational being is strongly excited to radiate its own species and virtues from itself into its own body and foreign matter." The voice, influenced by the rational soul, makes itself felt upon the atmosphere and all objects contained in it; and since the air and objects are receiving at the same time the influences of the stars, it follows that incantations "are words brought forth by the exertion of the rational soul, and receive the virtue of the sky as they are pronounced."<sup>37</sup> Words may be said, therefore, to reinforce by the power of rational soul the energy radiated from the stars and fixed in the image. Constantinus Africanus, on the other hand, presents an argument less tinged with suggestions of black magic. Since the time of the Greeks, says he, physicians have known that the humours of the body are directly related to the dispositions or virtues of the mind; the complexions of the body, indeed, determine in large measure the cast of the disposition. For example, the complexion in which cholera predominates so reacts upon the mind that the subject is easily angered; the sanguine man, on the other hand, is of a joyous and sunny disposition. And *econverso*, that which strongly affects from the outside the state of a man's mind causes a reaction upon the humours of the body and a consequent change in the com-

plexion. It is evident, therefore, that if a physician can so employ amulets, and charms, and astrological images — whether they have any inherent power or not — as to put his patient's mind at rest from terror, to inspire confidence, and to arouse an intense desire for health, then the humours of the body will be affected and health probably restored.<sup>38</sup> As a thorough-going mental therapist Constantinus would not hesitate to employ astrological images with or without incantations, characters, and adjurations.

Returning now to the case of our hypothetical patient whose continuous fever is broken on Friday and for whom it becomes necessary to make an astrological image, we may create under the direction of Thebit and Arnoldus such an image for this present situation. We may suppose that the Doctor has already gone through the preliminary processes of forming an Aries-image: "Take the purest gold and melt it while the Sun is entering Aries; and while shaping it into a round seal, say these words: *Exurge lux mundi Iesu vere Agnus, qui tollis peccata mundi, & illuminas tenebras nostras*, and repeat the Psalm beginning, *Domine Dominus noster* . . . ; and when you have made it, lay it aside."<sup>39</sup> The physician presumably has this with him. He now engraves on one side the figure of a ram and above it the name of the ascendent ("Aries"), the name and unfortunate position of the lord of the ascendent ("Mars cadent in Libra"), and the name and favorable position of Luna ("Luna exalted in Cancer"); in the circumference he writes, *Arabel tribus Iuda*, 5 & 7. On the reverse side he engraves the following most sacred

words in the circumference: *Verbum caro factum est, & habitavit in nobis*, and in the central part, *Alpha & omega, & Sanctus Petrus*.<sup>40</sup> Having secured this most powerful image somewhere upon the head of the already convalescing man, your physician may return home assured that the celestial influences, which have been instrumental in curing his patient and which are now fixed in the image, will continue to protect him from further attacks of continuous fever.

With all these complexities in the theory and practice of medicine Chaucer's Doctor of Physic is, as we have seen, doubtless conversant. His speaking acquaintance with surgery, however, is probably confined to certain fundamental and elementary principles dealing with the influence of Luna in the twelve signs when the case requires blood-letting or perhaps cauterization. He knows, of course, that the parts of the body are attributed respectively to the various signs of the Zodiac, i.e., that the bodily parts partake of the complexions or qualities of the signs; that, for example, the head has the complexion of Aries, the neck of Taurus, and so on. He observes that when Luna is in Gemini, the sign corresponding to the shoulders and arms, it is unwise to let blood from the arms by cupping and that scarification with a scalpel or with any other iron instrument is likely to prove fatal. This is true because when Luna is situated in any sign corresponding to a member, there is danger that the confluence of humours to such a member may cause serious infection.<sup>41</sup> He is also skilled, no doubt, in the gathering of herbs and in the preparation of his medicines under certain favorable aspects of the stars.<sup>42</sup>

And it is indisputable that he has made an exhaustive study of dietetics,<sup>43</sup> for here at least he follows his own prescription:

Of his diete mesurable was he,  
For it was of no superfluitee,  
But of greet norissing and digestible  
(*C. T.*, A, 435 ff.).

Surely no one could find anything to "pinche at" in either the preparation or learning<sup>44</sup> of Chaucer's Doctor of Physic; he seems to be an outstanding representative of the theoretical and practising physicians of his time. But as to his character — that is another matter.

## II

Chaucer's forty-four lines of tantalising description devoted to the Doctor of Physic constitutes not so much a satire upon the principles of mediaeval medicine as a character-sketch of contemporary physicians. The poet would scarcely presume to criticise a historically respectable body of scientific principles, though covert references might seem to indicate a healthy skepticism regarding empirical remedies. But the student of human nature undoubtedly has a discerning eye fixed merrily upon the pompous and fraudulent practitioners of his time who bungle the handling of these principles; he may even have in mind a particular physician of his acquaintance, as has been conjectured, such as possibly John of Burgundy. Whether he gathers his material from observation of the individual or the class, however, the artist is interested primarily in the complex char-

acter growing under his hand. While the outline of the Doctor's knowledge and preparation is comparatively easy to follow, a clear understanding of his personality, presented for the most part by means of sly suggestion and innuendo, is exceedingly difficult to arrive at. Indeed, after one has considered that the whole passage probably represents by way of indirect discourse the Doctor's own estimate of himself and his abilities, that he and his apothecaries have been combined these many years for the purpose of fleecing the public, and that his study is but little upon the Bible, one begins to question whether he is ever quite sincere and frank with his patients and whether his learning is as broad and accurate as he would have it appear.

For the good Doctor apparently talks too much. He is exceedingly, though perhaps not abnormally, well pleased with himself and with his profession, and seems determined that the Canterbury Pilgrims shall be properly impressed by his successes in the recent pestilences. One has the impression that he discourses rather ostentatiously upon the occult philosophy of medicine, the influence of the stars on the elements and consequently on the humours in the human body, upon the mysteries connected with image-making and the confining of powerful astral influences in bits of gold and silver, and upon the great importance of "ascendents," "hours," and such. If anybody is interested, he doubtless lectures with a show of wisdom upon diets, illustrating his points by reference to his own personal habits in that matter; everybody, of course, waits breathlessly to learn what so eminent a medical man has for breakfast in January,



for dinner in March, or for supper in April. The names of fifteen illustrious physicians — Greek, Arabian, and modern — roll impressively from his tongue as if they were selected on the spur of the moment and at random from a much larger reading-list. It does not particularly matter that he fails to present them in strict historical order; his hearers are laymen and will not discover the difference. And his relations with his apothecaries are no doubt referred to as an indication of his astuteness as a business man, of which his general appearance and bearing suggest that he is inordinately proud. He is perhaps to be classed with those other physicians of whom John of Salisbury speaks: "They soon return from college full of flimsy theories to practise what they have learned. Galen and Hippocrates are continually in their mouths. They speak aphorisms on every subject, and make their hearers stare at their long, unknown, and high-sounding words. The good people believe that they can do anything because they pretend to all things. When I hear them talk I fancy that they can raise the dead. . . . They have only two maxims which they never violate: Never mind the poor; never refuse money from the rich." <sup>45</sup> At any rate, in all this world there has never been a man like Chaucer's Doctor for *speaking* of physic and surgery.

He is a cold-blooded rationalist, moreover, a strictly scientific man who boasts that his study is but little upon the Bible. This bit of information on the part of the reporter is neither accidental nor incidental; it indicates, I suspect, that the Doctor belongs to that class of physicians who find rational causes at the root of all maladies

and who depend exclusively upon their own skill in the manipulation of natural laws for the working of cures. John of Salisbury complains at length of such godless men: "But the physicians, while they attribute too much authority to Nature, cast aside the Author of Nature, notwithstanding the faith. Not that I would charge them all with errors, though I have heard many of them disputing otherwise than faith would have it about the soul, its energies and working, about the growth and decline of the body, and its resurrection, and about the creation of bodies both natural and spiritual. Sometimes they talk about God Himself,

‘As if earth-born giants were to attempt the stars,’

and by their empty toil appear to be anxious to deserve the fate of Enceladus and to have placed upon them the fiery burden of Etna. . . . It is of little moment if some physicians sell an imaginary benefit, and that they may appear the more honest take no fee before the patient is well. But such are dishonest in that they give themselves the credit for a recovery which is due to time, or rather to the gift of God; for it is due to God and to the natural power of his constitution that the sick man is raised up. Few are they who act in this way, for you will always hear physicians advising one another as follows: Take your fee while the patient still feels it.”<sup>46</sup> A later writer, Ahasverus Fritschius, is still more violent in his condemnation of such impious and inflated physicians who confide more in their own skill than in divine grace, arrogating to themselves the credit for cures which belongs rightfully to God: “Quando medicus felicem

curam sibi adscribens exclamat: HOC EGO FECI! tune fiunt FECES Impious is such a physician, and he who thinks and speaks after this fashion insults his Creator." <sup>47</sup> Yet one may strongly suspect that Chaucer's Doctor is this sort of man, trusting to his own intellect in understanding and to his skill in managing the laws of nature, relying upon his power to compel the influence of constellations according to the principles of natural magic, and leaving out of account God, the Author of Nature, and His will as it is made manifest in the Bible. He would probably hold in supreme contempt such pious incantations as those which accompany Arnoldus de Villa Nova's making of astrological images. Arnold, it will be recalled, acknowledges God and repeats a Psalm while creating every several image for the twelve signs. For example further, for the seal in Taurus he says, *Exurge Domine Deus meus, adiutor meus*, and repeats entire the Psalm beginning, *Confitebor tibi Domine, in toto corde meo, narrabo omnia mirabilia tua*. . . . But what has the Doctor of Physic to do with such nonsense? He is of the opinion, doubtless, that to call upon God when Nature is sufficient is a confession of weakness or an indication of fragmentary knowledge; superstition is reprehensible whether it is connected with religious faith or with the practices of black magic. He stands complacently upon the principles of natural magic; he is conscious of eminent success in his profession; and, moreover, his digestion is excellent. Therefore his study is but little upon the Bible.

This particular Doctor and his apothecaries, moreover, are guilty of certain frauds and abuses of privilege

which net each of them a substantial profit. How is this end accomplished? I have been unable to find any law or edict promulgated in England before 1511 — the date of Henry the Eighth's "Act for Appointing of Physicians and Surgeons" — designed to regulate the practice of physicians and control the traffic of chemists;<sup>48</sup> and, in the fourteenth century, literary allusions to abuses prevalent among the medical fraternity are scant.<sup>49</sup> But a brief review of the violent controversy waged about the middle of the seventeenth century between Christopher Merritt and his opponents regarding the malpractices of physicians and apothecaries may throw some light upon the condition of affairs in Chaucer's day; abuses deep-rooted and guarded by tradition may well persist for three hundred years or more. Mr. Merritt, in *A Short View of the Frauds and Abuses Committed by Apothecaries* (London, 1669), charges among other things that the chemists of his time load medicines with honey and other cheaper ingredients and leave out those of greater value, that they repeat long courses of physic unadvisedly and needlessly when nothing or very little is necessary to be done, and that they put what rates they please upon their simples and compounds. "But their principal Art of all," he continues, "is to cry up and bring to patients such unworthy Physicians, who through covetousness do, or through meanness of parts or want, must comply with the Apothecaries Interest; and such Practisers they extol and cry up for good Physicians, which some of them call more expressly good Apothecaries Physicians; and such without doubt the whole Company will raise unto a fame and practice.

But such as write only for the good of the patient, and not for the benefit of the Apothecary . . . they will endeavour to prevent their calling in, or shuffle out. Now this good Apothecaries Physician they describe by his frequent though needless visits, but especially the multitude of his Bills by his visiting twice a day or oftener (a very painful and careful Dr.) and by his writing new Medicines . . . making an Apothecaries Shop in the Patient's House, planting the Cupboards and Windows with Glasses and Galley-pots, and not a quarter of the whole made use of. He prescribes a medicine for every slight complaint, and never goes away from the Patient, or the Patient from him, without a Bill, for fear of the Apothecaries grumbling." <sup>50</sup>

Another writer, the anonymous author of *The Accomplisht Physician, the Honest Apothecary, and the Skilful Surgeon* (London, 1670), quite agrees with Dr. Merritt. He finds "that Physicians all, or most, being tied to particular Apothecaries, prescribe their Bills in terms so obscure that they force all chance patients to repair to their own Apothecaries, pretending a particular secret, which only they have the key to unlock; whereas in effect it's no other than the commonest of Medicines, disguised under an unusual name, on design to direct you to an Apothecary, between whom and the Physician there is a private compact of going snips. . . . The consequence hereof as to your particular patient is a double fraud; and as to Apothecaries in general, their number bearing the proportion of at least ten parts to one of noted Physicians, to whom allowing each his Covenant Apothecary, who constituting but one part of

the ten, the remaining nine parts of the number are compelled either to sit still or to Quack for a livelyhood. . . . All Accomplished Physicians are likewise exposed to the manifest injuries from those Covenant Apothecaries, who being sent for by the Patients, after the short essay of a Cordial will overpower them by persuasions to call in a Doctor who shall be no other than his Covenant Physician, by which means the former Physician . . . shall be passed by. And should it happen, the sense of gratitude of the Patient should engage him to continue the use of his former Physician, yet this Covenant Apothecary shall privately cavil at every Bill and impute the appearance of every small pain . . . to his ill address in the Art of Physic, and shall not give over before, he hath introduced his Covenanteer, whose authority in the fraud of a physic Bill he supposes to be most necessary.”<sup>51</sup> This anatomy of seventeenth century abuses doubtless describes more or less accurately — perhaps with a degree of understatement — the relations existing between Chaucer’s Doctor of Physic, such an Apothecaries’ Physician, and his selected chemists, Covenant Apothecaries. And their friendship has been of long standing.

And finally, Chaucer suggests that his good Doctor so loves gold that he is inclined to prescribe *aurum potable* upon every convenient occasion, not necessarily for the good of the patient (though “gold in phisik is a cordial”) but because a little of it greatly increases the price of the medicine. Our Dr. Merritt notes a like practice: “To advance the prices, you shall hardly ever see a Bill without *Bezoar* or *Pearls* in it, to make peo-



ple think them very chargeable; whereas there is sometimes not above a grain or two of these dear ingredients in it, and a few grains of these or Ambergrise doubles or trebles the price of the Medicines, and are sure never to be omitted in their Bills, besides the gilding of their Pills, and covering their Boluses and Electuaries with gold (which have only an imaginary and no real use in Medicines so used) much inhanseth their prices, and a rich *Cordial* inserted exceedingly advanceth most of their Bills.”<sup>52</sup> So by gilding his cheap pills and charging high prices for them, by covering the electuaries<sup>53</sup> received from his Covenant Apothecaries with a film of gold, and by putting a few drops of *aurum potabile*, the Elixir of Life, into his cordials, Chaucer’s Doctor is provided with such wealth that he is able to make a holiday-pilgrimage to Canterbury, arrayed in clothes of a blood-red and bluish-grey color lined with taffeta and thin silk. He is your complete fourteenth century physician.

Thus Chaucer’s Doctor of Physic is, as we have seen, a curious compound of contradictory elements which make his character second only to that of the Wife of Bath in complexity. He acknowledges that he is acquainted with the works of sundry great medical authorities of ancient times, but one might suspect that the medical treatises with which he is thoroughly familiar are perhaps as mythical as those of the old Esculapius; he may be grounded in astrology, but it is to be feared that his observance of “hours” and his astrological images are potent somewhat less because he understands how to control the power of the stars than because he knows

how to play upon human credulity; he comprehends the mysteries of alchemy and the virtues of *aurum potabile*, maybe, but one is privileged to doubt whether the gilding of his pills and electuaries is meant to be as powerful in working cures as in transmuting the base metal in his purse to pure gold; perhaps the pleasant association with his apothecaries is so much in the nature of a closed corporation that the patients are practically excluded from sharing in the profits; he *may* be a pious man who has no time for reading the Bible or a rank materialist who contemns religion — we are not sure. In fact, we cannot be absolutely sure about anything in the Doctor's character. Chaucer has created him so. And it is this very uncertainty as to his honesty, his honor, his sincerity, and his learning which lends a certain life-like complexity to his character and actions; it is this human contradictoriness which the author — doubtless with much twinkling of eyes and thrusting of tongue in cheek — seizes upon and develops by suggestion. The result is not merely a description of any particular man or of a professional type, but a work of art — that very human and complex Doctor of Physic himself.<sup>54</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO

## THE SUMMONER AND THE COOK

AMONG the Canterbury Pilgrims there are two, the Summoner and the Cook,<sup>1</sup> who bear upon their diseased bodies the marks of vicious living. Although the Summoner appears to stand in no awe of the Archdeacon's curse on account of his spiritual degeneracy, he may well consider the advisability of consulting the Doctor of Physic, or some other practising physician, regarding his aggravated physical disease. For all symptoms indicate that he is a dangerously sick man. Says the poet:

A Somnour was ther with us in that place,  
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubinnes face,  
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.  
As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe;  
With scalled browes blake, and piled berd;  
Of his visage children were aferd.  
Ther nas quik-silver, litarge, ne brimstoon,  
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,  
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,  
That him mighte helpen of his whelkes whyte,  
Nor of the knobbes sittinge on his chekes.  
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,  
And for to drinken strong wyn, reed as blood.

(*C. T.*, A, 623 ff.)

If one may put faith in the accuracy of Chaucer's observation and description of the case, together with his

suggestion of the possible causes of the ailment and his intimation of the remedies which ordinarily might be expected to work a cure, and if a layman might venture upon a diagnosis, by the card, according to the medical lore of the Middle Ages, it would seem that the Summoner has been afflicted with a species of morphea known as *gutta rosacea*, which has already been allowed to develop into that kind of leprosy called *alopicia*.

He who would seek to unravel the utter confusion of terms applied by mediaeval medical writers to different contagious and non-contagious skin diseases, sets for himself an almost impossible task. Each author classifies and reclassifies, divides once and again to suit his own pleasure, so that in the end a perplexed reader can scarcely distinguish psora from leuce, albaras from melos, or impetigo from morphea. Lanfrank attempts to bring order out of chaos,<sup>2</sup> but his fraternal enemy, Guy de Chauliac, impatiently finds his conclusions far from satisfactory. In spite of wide differences of opinion, however, I gather that morphea — by whatever name it may be designated — is a skin disease resulting from certain impurities in the blood, and that there are three or four species of it corresponding to the four natural humours of the body. That “cursed monk dan Constantyn” — whose work Chaucer mentions (*C. T.*, E, 1811)<sup>3</sup> — says: “Morphea is a corruption of the blood from which the skin of the body is nourished, or it may be an affection of the intercutaneous flesh. The general cause of it may be found in the weakening of the digestive virtue; for when the digestive virtue is exhausted, the blood which should nourish the skin is corrupted.”<sup>4</sup>

Gilbertus Anglicus — Chaucer's "Gilbertyn" (*C. T.*, A, 434) — is of the opinion that the immediate or "antecedent causes are the four humours. The type that has its origin in blood, *ex sanguine*, is more akin to leprosy. Each several humour imparts its own color to the skin: the morphea which comes from a corruption of blood is of a reddish color; that which originates in cholera is of a citron color; in salt phlegm, *de salso flegme*, of a golden-yellow color; in natural phlegm, of a white color; and that which proceeds from melancholia is black." <sup>5</sup>

Now we may suppose that the type of morphea which is produced *de sanguine* and which covers the skin of the face with livid red pustules is to be identified with the *gutta rosacea* of various authors. Bartholomaeus de Glanvilla suggests as much. "Morphea is specks in the skin, and originates from a corruption of meat and drink. And that which is leprosy in the flesh is morphea in the skin; though morphea is in the skin alone, and leprosy is in both the flesh and skin. Morphea is incurable if the skin does not bleed when it is pricked with a needle; but if it bleeds, then it is curable. This infection differs but little from what is called *gutta rosacea*, which covers the face with small and soft pimples." <sup>6</sup> And Bernardus de Gordon, whose account is similar to that of Bartholomew, leaves no doubt as to the identity of the two diseases: "And if it (morphea) has its origin *de sanguine* and appears in the face, it is called *gutta rosacea*." <sup>7</sup>

Still further and more detailed descriptions of this malady, together with discussions of causes and remedies

for effecting cures, may be found in almost every medical work of any importance dating from Chaucer's century. Lanfrank says: "*Gutta rosacea* is a malady which turns the skin of a man's face from its natural color and makes the face red. It originates in the corruption of humours in the skin."<sup>8</sup> Andrew Boorde, in a description of a "Sawceflewme Face" found in his *Dietary*, remarks: "*Gutta rosacea* are the Latin words that designate this malady; in English it is called 'a sauce flewme face,' and the symptoms of it are a redness about the nose and cheeks together with small pimples; it is a privy sign of leprosy. . . . This infection comes of evil diet, and a hot liver, and the disordering of a man's complexion in his youth, of late drink and great surfeiting."<sup>9</sup> And a still further account is given by the later writers, Willan and Thomas Bateman, under the head of *Acne rosacea*, to which is appended the note, "This is the *gutta rosea*, or *rosacea*, of authors": "This form of *Acne* differs in several respects from the preceding species (*Acne simplex*, *punctata*, and *indurata*). In addition to an eruption of small suppurating tubercles, there is also a shining redness, and an irregular granulated appearance of the skin of that part of the face which is affected. The redness commonly appears first at the end of the nose, and afterwards spreads from both sides of the nose to the cheeks, the whole of which, however, it seldom covers. In the commencement it is not uniformly vivid; but is paler in the morning, and readily increased to an intense red after dinner, or at any time if a glass of wine or spirits be taken. . . . This species of *Acne* seldom occurs in early life . . . ; in gen-



eral it does not appear before the age of forty; but it may be produced in any person by the constant, immoderate use of wine and spiritous liquors. The greater part of the face, even the forehead and the chin, are often affected in these cases; but the nose especially becomes tumid, and of a fiery red color. . . . At this period of life, too, the colour of *Acne rosacea* becomes darker and more livid; and if suppuration take place in any of the tubercles, they ulcerate unfavorably, and do not readily assume a healing disposition.”<sup>10</sup> This is a rather accurate description, I take it, of the Summoner’s appearance in the earlier stages of his disease; but not even the most violent case of *gutta rosacea* can account for his “scalled browes blake and piled berd,” nor for his “narwe” eyes, nor for the “whelkes whyte” and the “knobbes” sitting on his cheeks. Though there is, of course, actually no relation between any of these skin diseases and leprosy proper,<sup>11</sup> Chaucer is evidently following the medical opinion of his time in supposing that the “sawcefleem” has already developed into that type of leprosy which is produced *de sanguine*.

In all the works of medical writers from the ancient Greeks and Arabians on down to the authors who may be said to have laid the foundations of modern medicine, the general signs of elephantiasis or leprosy are found to be about the same.<sup>12</sup> Says Bernardus de Gordon: “The infallible signs are these: A falling out and a scabbiness of the eyebrows, a roundness (*rotunditas*) of the eyes, and an enlargement of the nostrils externally and a contraction internally. Breathing becomes difficult, and the patient speaks as if through the nose;

on the face there is a kind of pallor verging upon the deathly, and the appearance of the face is terrible with its fixed look. . . . The secret signs in the beginning are these: the color of the face is reddish inclining to blackness, the breathing begins to alter, and the voice becomes hoarse.”<sup>13</sup> Bartholomaeus de Glanvilla agrees: “In those afflicted with leprosy the flesh is perceptibly corrupted, the eyes and eyelids are corrugated or wrinkled (*corrugantur*) and have a certain glitter; the nostrils are constricted; and the voice becomes raucous.”<sup>14</sup> And John of Gaddesden — Chaucer’s “Gatesden” (*C. T.*, A, 434) — definitely associates the general symptoms with *gutta rosacea*: “In the first place you must note if the usual red color of the face tends toward a black hue, and if the patient suffers from *gutta rosacea* in his nose and face . . . if he sweats much and his hair begins to get thin and sparse. . . . In these cases the color of the body tends towards black; the patient is afflicted with laboured breathing and a husky voice (*strictura anhelitus et vocis*) . . . thinness and falling of the hair, *rotunditas* of the eyes, and a greasiness of the skin.”<sup>15</sup> Even the general signs of elephantiasis agree, it will be observed, with the physiognomical characteristics which Chaucer has attributed to the Summoner.

It must also be noted that the earlier of our modern writers on the science of medicine describe the elephantiasis of the Greeks merely as a species of lepra, of which they are acquainted with four types: namely, the elephantia, leonina, alopecia, and tyria, each being associated with one of the four various humours of the body. This arrangement dates first from Alsaharavius.<sup>16</sup> For

example, as Bartholomaeus has it: "In foure manner wise Lepra is diuerse, as the foure humours be passingly and diuersely medled. One manner Lepra commeth of pure Melancholia, and is called *Elephancia*, and hath that name of the Elephant, that is a full great beast and large. For this euill griueth and noieth the patient passing strongly and sore. The second commeth of melancholy and fleme, and is called *Tiria*, or *Serpentina*; and hath yt name of an adder that is called *Tirus*. For as an Adder leaueth lightlye his skin and his scale, so he that hath this manner Lepra is oft stript and pilled and full of scales. The third manner of Lepra commeth of melancholy, infecting of blood, and is called *Alopecia*, and *Vulpina*. . . . The Foxe hath a proper tie, that his haire falleth in Summer for heat of bloud in the liuer; so oft his haire that hath this euill falleth from his browes, and from other places. The fourth manner Leperhood commeth of red Cholera, corrupt in the members with melancholy, and is called *Leonina*." <sup>17</sup>

Now in our discussion of the Summoner we are concerned only with the third species, *alopicia*, which is a disease of the flesh growing out of an infection of the humour, blood, and ordinarily associated with the skin disease, *gutta rosacea*, which we have found to be a kind of morphea originating *de sanguine*. Arnoldus de Villa Nova—Chaucer's "Arnold of the Newe Toun" (*C. T.*, G, 1428) — describes it at considerable length: "Alopecia is a species of leprosy which is produced *ex sanguine adjusto*. This type is marked by a complete depilation of the eyebrows and beard. The eyes of the patient become inflated (*inflantur*) and exceedingly red.

Pimples of a reddish color appear in the face and even on the whole body, from which runs corruption mixed with blood; the veins are visible on the breast; and the odor of these and the perspiration and of the breath are loathsome. The cheeks swell up.”<sup>18</sup> Gilbertus Anglicus, after giving a like account of the origin of the name and of the cause of the malady — “sit autem ex sanguine corrupto et superabundante, et negligentia dietæ et flommie” — continues: “Moreover, reddish-yellow spots full of phlegm appear upon the skin. . . . The eyes are watery and bloodshot; the eyebrows and eyelashes scale off, and the eyelids are turned wrong side out and thickened (*inversantur et ingrossantur*). . . . Nay, even the whole body and the face are spread with reddish spots and pimples, and the excessively tender flesh is always smeared over with a kind of whitish flatulence.”<sup>19</sup> Surely when one looks closely at the Summoner, there can be no doubt that he is suffering from *alopicia*. The small pimples which might once have indicated *gutta rosacea* have developed into great matter-infected pustules — “whelkes whyte” and “knobbes” — of true leprosy. His eyebrows have nearly all fallen out,<sup>20</sup> and in place of them there is discovered a scabby, scurfy mark of black color; his beard, too, has the scall to such an extent that it is thin and slight. His eyes are swollen and inflamed to a violent red, and the lids, already deprived of lashes, are enlarged and corrugated so that he is able to see only through narrow slits between them. His eyes, as Chaucer says, are “narwe.” It is not to be wondered at that children are afraid of such a face! And if one might broadly interpret, in the light

of the foregoing material, the "stif burdoun" which he bears to the Pardoner's little love song (*C. T.*, A, 673) and his crying out as if he were mad after a drink of blood-red wine, his voice has possibly that rough and husky quality spoken of by medical men as an infallible sign of the leper.

Chaucer has indicated, moreover, the two principal causes of the disease: the Summoner is "lecherous as a sparwe," and is accustomed to the eating of onions, garlic, and leeks and to the drinking of strong wine red as blood. The rascal is either criminally ignorant or foolishly indifferent. He might have learned from any physician of his time, or before, that leprosy may be contracted by illicit association with women infected with it <sup>21</sup> (in mediaeval medicine *lepra* is possibly confused with syphilis), that garlic, onions, and leeks produce evil humours in the blood, and that red wine of all others is the most powerful and heating of drinks. Bartholomaeus, for example, fathers the opinion that leprosy "commeth of fleshlye lyking, by a woman soone after that a leprous man hath laye by her. . . . And sometimes it commeth of too hot meates, as long use of strong pepper, and of garlike, and of such other. And sometimes of corrupt meates, and of meates that be soone corrupt, as of meselyd Hogges, of flesh that haue peeces therein, and is infected with such poison and greines. And of uncleane wine and corrupt." <sup>22</sup> The reckless Summoner might have found by consulting the *Isogoge* of Joannitius that "certain kinds of vegetables produce evil humours: for instance, nasturtium, mustard, and garlic beget reddish bile; lentils, cabbage, and the meat

of old goats and beeves produce black bile.”<sup>23</sup> Paulus Aegenita might have informed him that the “onion, garlic, leek and dog-leek, being of an acrid nature, warm the body, attenuate and cut the thick humours contained in it; when twice boiled, they give little nourishment, and when unboiled they do not nourish at all. Garlic is more deobstruent and diaphoretic than the others. . . . And regarding pot-herbs in general, the raw, when eaten, furnish worse juices than the boiled, as they have more excrementitious juice.”<sup>24</sup> Boorde might have warned him that “onyons doth prouoke a man to veneryous actes and to sompnolence” and that “he that is infectyd wyth any of the four kynds of lepored must refrayne from al maner of wyne, and from new drynkes, and stronge ale; let hym beware of ryot and surfeytynge.”<sup>25</sup> For as Bartholomaeus puts it, “Red wine that is full redde as bloud is most strong, and griueth much the head, and noieth the wit, and maketh strong dronkenness,”<sup>26</sup> or according to Paulus, “Wine in general is nutritious but that which is red and thick is more particularly so; but its juices are not good.”<sup>27</sup> The Summoner, however, has either not read or has treated with contempt the medical authorities. Having once contracted *alopicia* by riotous and lascivious living, by the immoderate use of unwholesome meats and wines, he further aggravates it by the same foolhardy practices.

Finally, it must be observed that Chaucer has apparently lifted the remedies, which he suggests have already been used in this case without effect, directly from the medical books.



Ther nas quik-silver, litarge, ne brimstoon,  
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,  
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,  
That him mighte helpen of his whelkes whyte.

Lanfrank's prescription for the cure of *gutta rosacea* includes "litargiri, auripigmenti, sulphuris viui, viridis eris, oleum tartarinum, argenty viui,"<sup>28</sup> and Guy de Chauliac would treat the same disease with "aigre de citron, ceruse, argent vif, borax, souldphre et alun, avec huil de tartre."<sup>29</sup> For the more violent cases of skin disorders and for leprosy, Guy recommends the careful and judicious use of "le medicament corrosif" or perhaps of "le medicament caustique,"<sup>30</sup> the chief ingredient of which is arsenic — and to which Chaucer clearly refers when he speaks of the "oynement that wolde clense and byte." The poet is to be highly commended for his wisdom in ignoring the empirical remedy, composed largely of an adder variously prepared, which most of the medical men of his time employ.

That drunken reprobate, the Cook, is also afflicted with a kind of cutaneous eruption, which is less malignant than that of the Summoner but perhaps more offensive to the eye. Chaucer professes an appreciation of his culinary art but cannot help observing, rather ruefully, the unsightly physical impediment calculated to suppress any too violent gustatory ardor:

But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
That on his shine a mormal hadde he.

(*C. T.*, A, 385 ff.).

It is generally agreed, it seems, that the "mormal" from which the Cook suffers is to be identified with what mediaeval medical writers call *malum mortuum*.<sup>31</sup> This disease, which is considered under separate headings by most of the authors whom I have consulted, must not be confused with cancer or gangrene; it appears to be a species of ulcerated, dry-scabbed apostema produced by corruption in the blood of natural melancholia or sometimes of melancholia combined with *salsum phlegma*.

As to the causes and appearance of the malady Theodoricus is explicit: "*Malum mortuum* is an infirmity infecting the arms and shins of the patient. It consists of dry ulcers, slightly generative at times of bloody matter, which are produced sometimes from a corruption of pure melancholia and sometimes from melancholia mixed with salt phlegm. If the disease have its origin in pure melancholia, it is recognised by black pustules without itching; but if salt phlegm be involved, the apostema becomes livid with itching and gripings."<sup>32</sup> Bernardus de Gordon — Chaucer's "Bernard" (*C. T.*, A, 434) — gives a still fuller account: "*Malum mortuum* is a species of scabies, which arises from corrupted natural melancholia or from melancholia mixed with salt phlegm. The marks of it are large pustules of a leaden or black color, scabbed, and exceedingly fetid, though suppuration and discharge do not occur; and it is frequently accompanied by a certain insensibility in the places affected. In appearance it is most unsightly, coming out as it does on the hip-bones and often on the shin-bones. Moreover, the cause of this scabies is much consuming of melancholic foods, retention of catamenia,

and the like.”<sup>33</sup> And John of Gaddesden concludes his discussion “De malo mortuo” with the remark: “And it is caused by the consumption of melancholic foods, such as the flesh of cattle and salt fish, and by intercourse with a woman *menstruata* or leprous or wormy.”<sup>34</sup> One may suspect that the Cook’s “mormal” is of the type which is produced from a corruption of melancholia mixed with salt phlegm and that he is continually troubled with a severe itching, for as Lanfrank says: “Icching and scabbe cometh of salt humours, and nature hath abhominacioun therof, and putteth hem out of the skyn, and this falleth ofte of salt metis and sharpe metis and of wijn that is strong; and it falleth ofte to hem that wakith and traveilith and usith no bathing and werith no linnen clothis. And this is oon of the siknes that is contagious.”<sup>35</sup>

To understand the prurient nature and particularly the causes of *malum mortuum* and of *alopicia* is to have a rather intimate acquaintance with the personalities and probable secret lives of Roger Hogge of Ware and the Summoner. It would be exceedingly precarious to assume that in creating these characters Chaucer intends them to be considered as types or representatives of physical diseases or even that medical material has furnished the main source of inspiration for his artistic production. These knaves of fourteenth century England are far too sentient and vitally human to have been constructed in accordance with any mechanical principle; they breathe, enjoy life, suffer pain, and carry on their nefarious practices with motivated reactions as precisely adjusted as those of ordinary mortals. Nor can they be

thought of merely as life-sized portraits of particular men known to the poet; they are faithful transcripts from life, to be sure, but they are too inevitably themselves in their own right to be considered as descriptive replicas of actual historical personages. The materials used in the creation of these characters are drawn, as is usual with Chaucer, from an inexhaustible wealth of observations of men and their ways, of their emotions and contradictory desires, their hidden motives, impulses, and cross-purposes; and out of the fusion by the creative imagination of otherwise incoherent elements emerges the miracle, the unified and unique personalities respectively of the Summoner and the Cook. The character of each is individual and, as it were, all of a single piece; and every separate element of it is inextricably bound up with and affected by the ravages of physical disease. As in real life, the symptoms of these maladies appearing upon the face and body become the infallible indices of inward character.

In the General Prologue information is given to the effect that the Cook is preëminent in his profession, that he knows what a draught of London ale is like, and that he is afflicted with a mormal (*C. T.*, A, 381-387). This meagre characterization appears at first to be merely indecisive sketching, but the items concerning London ale and the mormal contain in solution, so to speak, all the elements of personality afterwards revealed. When it is recalled that *malum mortuum* is caused in the first place by uncleanly personal habits, such as lack of frequent bathing and the continuous wearing of soiled clothes, by the eating of melancholic foods and the drinking of

strong wines, and by disgraceful association with diseased and filthy women, then no one need be surprised at Roger Hogge's display of inebriety, slack morals, and predilection for salacious stories. A cook with a mormal is precisely the sort of person who might be expected to devour all tainted meats and spoiled victuals which he cannot palm off on long-suffering patrons of his art. Our Host directly charges him with bad dealings:

For many a pastee hastow laten blood,  
And many a Jakke of Dover hastow sold  
That hath been twyes hoot and twyes cold.  
Of many a pilgrim hastow Cristes curs,  
For of thy persly yet they fare the wors,  
That they han eten with thy stubbel-goos;  
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.

(*C. T.*, A, 4346, ff.).

The Cook confesses good-naturedly enough that it is true, but remarks, "Sooth pley, quaad pley." On the drab morning following a strenuous night of debauchery — the Host suspects that wine and women are involved — his dilapidated appearance is perhaps not less repulsive than his mormal. His face is haggard and pale, his eyes dazed because of drunkenness and lack of sleep, and when he gapes his sour breath so infects the air that the Maunciple is nauseated and reproves him sharply. In fact, Roger is so drunk with "wyn ape" that his rage against his critic is speechless; having fallen from his horse, he has to be helped up again; and in spite of the Host's sympathetic understanding and defense of his infirmity, he is not put in good humor again until

given another long drink of wine (*C. T.*, H, 25-85). His disease might indicate, moreover, that he is just the kind of man likely to claw the Reeve on the back for joy of a dirty tale (*C. T.*, A, 4326), and to begin one of his own featuring a jolly hero given to gaming, rioting in taverns, and reveling in stews, and a heroine who under cover of keeping a shop "swyved for hir sustenance" (*C. T.*, A, 4366 ff.). His acquaintance with such persons has probably been too intimate for his own good. Such is the Cook who suffers from a mormal and who knows a draught of London ale.

Likewise, the Summoner of boorish action and speech is in some measure the Summoner who has brought upon himself a terrible disease. His naturally cunning and grasping mind is at times dulled and his moral sense apparently atrophied by the ravages of *alopicia* and by the unabated malpractices which originally produced it. He continues to devour raw and innutritious vegetables and to swill quantities of wine red as blood, crowning himself in drunken foolery with a garland and in mockery arming himself with a buckler made of a cake. And as the fiery intoxicant courses through his veins, he parrots the few Latin terms which his numbed intelligence has been able to catch from the jargon of Ecclesiastical Courts. He is out upon a hilarious excursion, to be sure, but he doubtless runs true to form. In exchange for sundry quarts of wine it has long been his custom to wink at the blatant immorality of those able to buy immunity from the exercise of his authority. The Friar's indignant generalization regarding summoners is doubtless only too applicable in this instance:



Pardee, ye may wel knowe by the name,  
That of a somnour may no good be sayd; . . .  
A somnour is a renner up and doun  
With mandemens for fornicacioun,  
And is y-bet at every tounes ende

(*C. T.*, D, 1280 ff.).

Though Chaucer does not say so, our Summoner's tainted blood strongly indicates that the Archdeacon's messenger has called too promiscuously upon certain erring women of the diocese with other than the professional purpose of haling them into Court. This is the man who makes shocking revelations regarding the untidy dwelling-place of friars in Hell (*C. T.*, D, 1685-1708),<sup>36</sup> and who entertains the Canterbury Pilgrims with an unsavory but cleverly told story about a friar's attempt to acquire a justly proportionate share in an evanescent legacy. This is the cunning and observant rascal who surmises that the Archdeacon's absolution and *significavit* are effective only as a fraudulent means of extracting money from the offender's purse, and who by passing on this knowledge to his acquaintances teaches contempt for the Court and no doubt secures for himself a steady income (*C. T.*, A, 655). Such in brief is the Summoner who is afflicted with leprosy. The disease emphasised does not make the man, but it is indicative of much that the poet leaves unrecorded and consideration of it throws into high relief the elements of character portrayed.

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE PARDONER'S SECRET

APPARENT inconsistencies in Chaucer's portrayal of the Pardoner have, up to this time, received no quite satisfactory explanation. Offering contemporary historical evidence, J. J. Jusserand arrives at the conclusion that in the presentation of this character "there is not the slightest exaggeration in Chaucer, that he knew well the Pardoners of his time, and described them exactly as they were, and that he did not add a word, not justified by what he saw, in order to win our laughter or to enliven his description."<sup>1</sup> Professor Tupper, in developing his theory of Chaucer's architectonic use of the Seven Deadly Sins *motif* in the composition of the *Canterbury Tales*, asserts in one place<sup>2</sup> that the "rascal is formally illustrating" the Sins of Gluttony and Avarice, in another,<sup>3</sup> that he is "exemplifying only the vices of the tavern," and in still another,<sup>4</sup> that he must be considered "a typical glutton or tavern-reveler." And Professor Kittredge, in his attempt to harmonise certain conflicting elements in both character and story, seeks a pleasant but unconvincing solution of the problem in the supposition that this "one lost soul among the Canterbury Pilgrims," acting for the most part from the basest of motives, suffers for a single moment from a "paroxysm of agonized sincerity."<sup>5</sup> Still in spite of these illuminat-

ing investigations; I cannot help feeling that the Pardoner's character in its relation to his personal appearance, his impudent confessions of moral delinquency and fraud, and his apparently unreasonable anger against the Host need further treatment.<sup>6</sup>

Critics have heretofore given too little attention, perhaps, to the possible significance of those supposedly accidental items of personal appearance which Chaucer is so fond of introducing, seemingly at random, in the presentation of his characters. The Prioress, to be sure, with her blue eyes, her soft, red mouth, and broad forehead has been said to represent the conventional mediaeval type of feminine beauty;<sup>7</sup> Chaucer's pronouncement that the joined eyebrows of Criseyde constitutes her only blemish has been considered the result of an inherited literary taste.<sup>8</sup> These are beginnings of investigations along right lines. But to our modern minds the Pardoner's physical peculiarities are not, at first sight, vitally related to his immoral character; they may seem, after we have become acquainted with him, entirely appropriate and perhaps rather humours, but not essential. It will be recalled that he has long, straight hair as yellow as wax, which hangs thinly spread over his shoulders, each hair to itself; his eyes are wide open and glaring like those of a hare; his voice is high-pitched and as "thin" as that of a goat; he is entirely without any indication of a beard; and, if we may judge from the description which he gives of himself in the act of delivering one of his powerful sermons, his neck is long and scrawny;

Than peyne I me to strecche forth the nekke,  
And est and west upon the peple I bekke,  
As doth a dowe sitting on a berne

(*C. T.*, *C*, 395 ff.).

What did these physical characteristics signify to the mediaeval mind? Before we can grasp the full meaning of the poet's purpose in his careful delineation of the Canterbury Pilgrims or offer adequate criticism of the product of his artistry, it becomes necessary to acquire as nearly as possible the point of view with which the fourteenth century Englishman looked upon the world. It is not by chance that Chaucer, the artist, hits upon these particular items of personal appearance rather than upon others; nor does he fortuitously invest the Pardoner with them rather than the Cook or the Summoner. Here, as usual, Chaucer knows what he is about. His selection of both form and feature given to many of his characters is determined in large measure or at least influenced, I believe, by that universally popular class of "scientific" literature known to mediaeval readers as the physiognomies. Now physiognomy is nothing more than the art of discovering the characteristic qualities of the mind or temper of a man by observation of his form and the movements of his face or body, or both. Since, as we have seen, celestial influences are powerful in determining the physical constitution and in fashioning the mental complexion of a human being, the science or art of physiognomy is bound up with and is firmly grounded upon the principles of astrology. For Chaucer and for every educated man of his time this physiognomical lore

made it possible to judge with a certain degree of accuracy and with approximate infallibility the inner character of a man from a study of his form and features. According to well defined regulations they might interpret every line of the face, every shape and color of the eyes, and any tone of the voice. What, then, could be more natural than that Chaucer, who has before him a mediaeval audience no doubt familiar with physiognomical and astrological principles at least in a popularised form, should consult the physiognomies for suggestions as to the physical characteristics most appropriate for the men and women whom he wishes to introduce to his special audience?

With this idea in mind, let us proceed to examine what the physiognomies might have to say regarding the Pardoner's features in relation to his character. Antonius Polemon Laodicensis,<sup>9</sup> the most famous of the ancient physiognomists and perhaps the founder of the science, says of glaring eyes prominently set that they indicate a "man given to folly, a glutton, a libertine, and a drunkard";<sup>10</sup> and an early anonymous author, whose work is evidently based upon that of Polemon, informs us that the person with "outstanding, bright eyes from which the eyelids have a tendency to withdraw, and with a high-pitched or shrill voice, is impudent and most dangerous."<sup>11</sup> The Middle English version of the *Secreta Secretorum*, which was certainly known to Chaucer (*C. T.*, G, 1447), also agrees that among other tokens of a shameless man are "ryst opyn eighyn and glysinge," and adds the significant remark that "tho that haue the voyce hei, smale and swete and pleasaunt, bene

neshe and haue lytill of manhode, and i-likened to women.”<sup>12</sup> Here, precisely as in Chaucer’s portrayal of the Pardoner, we find that the high, thin voice together with glaring eyes are directly associated with shameless impudence, gluttony, and licentiousness. Long and soft hair, immoderately fine in texture and reddish or yellow in color “indicates an impoverished blood, lack of virility, and effeminacy of mind; and the sparser the hair, the more cunning and deceptive is the man.”<sup>13</sup> Goclenius is of the opinion that a “long, slim neck is a sign of garrulity, haughtiness of spirit, and of evil habits” and that “a man beardless by nature is endowed with a fondness for women and for crafty dealings, inasmuch as he is impotent in performing the works of Venus. Yet repeatedly he exhibits a rare and singular intellectual cleverness. Examples are in evidence.”<sup>14</sup> The Pardoner is an example. That he is an abandoned rascal delighting in hypocrisy and possessed of a colossal impudence, no one can doubt after hearing his shameless confession and witnessing his attempt to hypnotise the Host; that he is a glutton and a perhaps typical tavern reveler is revealed by the fact that he calls for cakes and ale before he can properly relate a “moral tale”; that he is a man of no mean ingenuity and of considerable cleverness is proclaimed by the great amount of his yearly income from the practice of chicanery and fraud; and that his lack of beard and his goat-like voice indicate impotence, or at least effeminacy, Chaucer plainly affirms:

A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot;  
No berd hadde he, ne never sholde have,



As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;  
I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.

(C. T., A, 688 ff.).

In this passage the poet suggests the secret of the Pardoner; he is most unfortunate in his birth. He carries upon his body and has stamped upon his mind and character the marks of what is known to mediaeval physiognomists as a *eunuchus ex nativitate*. The Sophist Admantius (*ca.* the middle of the fourth century) devotes one whole section to eunuchs of this type: "Those who are eunuchs by fault of nature possess certain evil characteristics which distinguish them from other men; they are usually cruel, crafty, and vicious, but some are more so than others."<sup>15</sup> The Greek version of Polemon gives a similar account, but draws a sharp distinction between the *eunuchus ex nativitate* and the *eunuchus qui castratus est*: "Eunuchs who are the result of defective procreation are generally of the same type of mind, crafty and vicious, though some indeed merely execute other men's trickery. But he who has been made a eunuch differs in one respect: while he is brave and daring in whatever he may attempt, he has a more noble nature and is without the power of sustained effort."<sup>16</sup> Rasis, an eminent Arabian physician of the tenth century,<sup>17</sup> adds a few details regarding physical appearance: "A eunuch is always a man of evil habits; he is foolish, lustful and presumptuous. He, however, who *castratus non fuit, sed sine testiculis natus vel parvissimos habens eunuchus apparet* and who never has a beard,<sup>18</sup> is worse."<sup>19</sup> The anonymous author mentioned above, discussing the signifi-

cance of wide-open, glaring eyes, says further: "Eyes wide-open, glaring, and moving slowly with an ingratiating air correspond with the description which Polemon, the great author himself, gives of a eunuch said to have been famous in his time. He assigns other physical characteristics to this person as follows: a prominent forehead, thin neck, a feminine voice and womanly words. He says that this man, because of the impatience of the lust he endured, was also foul-mouthed and audacious, continually planning evil deeds, for he was said to have sold deadly poison secretly." <sup>20</sup>

Explanations of such physical phenomena are not lacking. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, speaking of the hair, remarks: "Also gelded men are not balde, and that is for chaungynge of theyr complexyon, and for maystery of colde, and closith and stoppth ye poores of skyne of ye heed and holyth togideres ye fumosite yt it maye not passe and be wasted. But in wymen and in gelded men other heer fallyth and faylyth." <sup>21</sup> He is also perfectly familiar with the reason for the "acute" voice: "Males haue stronger synewes and stringes than chyldren, and vngelded haue stronger than gelded. And for febylnes and synewes ye voys of theum yt ben gelded is lyke ye voys of females." <sup>22</sup> Nor is he at a loss for an explanation of the growth of beard. "And therfore," he continues, "the berde is nedefull helpynge for chekes and token of vertu and strengthe of kendely heet. And therfore a man hath a berde and not a woman; for a man is kyndly more hote than a woman. And therfore in a man ye smoke that is matere of heer encreasyth more than in a woman. And for kynde suffiseth not to waste

that smoke, he puttith and dryueth it out by two places, in the heed and in the berde. And therfore somtyme wymen hote and moyste of complexyon haue berdes. And in lyke wyse men of colde and drye complexyon haue lytyll berdes, and therfore in men yt ben gelded growe noo berdes. For they haue loste the hote membre that sholde brede the hote humour and smoke, the matere of heer.”<sup>23</sup> Whatever may be said of Chaucer’s knowledge of physiognomy, it is quite apparent that he is perfectly at home in the medical science of his time. His Pardoner is, in respect to hair and voice, scientifically correct.

Most of the authorities cited above, it will be observed, give Polemon as the authority upon the subject of eunuchs. It may be well, therefore, to present here in full the original sketch from which later writers evidently drew their material. Polemon pretends to be describing a celebrated eunuch of his own time, whose name, he affirms, he does not know. One anonymous author remarks, however, that “he is understood to have had a certain Favorinus in mind.”<sup>24</sup> That being the case, this may be Favorinus of Arles — a contemporary and a political opponent of Polemon — whose infirmity is ridiculed in Lucian’s *Eunuchus* and whose life is touched upon by Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists*.<sup>25</sup> The whole passage as it appears in the Arabic and Latin versions of Polemon is as follows: “When the eye is wide open and, like marble, glitters or coruscates, it indicates a shameless lack of modesty. This quality of the eyes is observed in a man who is not like other men, *ut eunuchus qui tamen non castratus est, sed*

*sine testiculis natus.* I have known, however, only one man of this kind. He was lustful and dissolute above all moderation — and his eyes were as I have described above. He had a prominent forehead, a long, thin neck, and his cries were like those of a woman. He took particular care of his person by nurturing his abundant hair, rubbing his body with medicated unguents, and by employing every expedient that might excite a desire for sexual pleasure. He was given to scornful jesting, and whatever came into his mind he acted upon immediately. Being learned in the Greek language, he was accustomed to use that tongue most. He frequented cities and market-places, meditating injustice and gathering men together in order that he might display evil. Above all he was a very astute wizard, practising feats of legerdemain and claiming the faculty of predicting life and death for men; wherefore he so influenced people that vast crowds of men and women flocked to him. Moreover, he persuaded men that he was able to force women to them just as they sought women. And surreptitiously he caused to transpire that which he had predicted. As an instructor in the doing of evil he was a past master; he collected all kinds of deadly poisons. And all the power of his ingenuity was directed toward the performance of these things. Whenever, therefore, you see eyes such as I have described at the beginning of this disputation, you may understand that their possessor is similar to this kind of eunuch.”<sup>28</sup>

Analysis of this particular passage reveals a marked likeness in the characters, modes of thought, and bodily characteristics of Favorinus and Chaucer’s Pardoner.

Indeed, the parallelism is so close that it may well seem as if Chaucer may have had this account, or perhaps one of the wide-spread anonymous versions of it, before him as he wrote. The eyes of Favorinus are wide-open and shining or glittering like marble, his neck is long and thin, his voice like that of a woman, and he takes great pride in his abundantly long hair to which, as to his whole body, he makes frequent applications of ointments; the Pardoner's eyes are glaring like those of a hare, he stretches forth his thin neck like a dove on a barn, and he is so inordinately proud of his long, perfectly straight hair — probably greased to make it hang smooth — that he prefers to wear simply a cap rather than the hood of his profession (A, 675). Favorinus is, moreover, sensual, lustful, and dissolute above all measure; the Pardoner is lecherous — at least in thought and imagination — and a typical tavern reveler (C, 452). The former speaks Greek in his public harangues; the latter “saffrons” his “predicaciouns” with Latin in order to stir men to devotion (C, 345 ff.). Both rascals possess a remarkable knowledge of mob-psychology: crowds of men and women throng the forums and public places where Favorinus pursues his nefarious practices; thousands of unsophisticated people flock to hear the Pardoner's sermons and to behold and perhaps purchase his marvellous relics of saints. The Sophist is a most astute magician who, professing to have received his power from the occult world, proclaims an uncanny knowledge of, and control over the mysteries of life and death; a self-announced sorcerer with evil mind and polluted imagination who affirms his ability to force

women to men even as men now seek women. The Pardoner is a shameless and impudent fraud who, bringing his spurious bulls and pardons all hot from the supreme spiritual authority at Rome, claims to exercise the power of life and death over the human soul; a colossal cynic who, cursed with a concupiscent mind and armed with false relics, offers to men a certain cure for jealousy — even though their wives are strumpets — and to women an easy absolution from the horrible sin of infidelity to their husbands. Both spit out venom under the hue of honesty or holiness (C, 420); both alike, urged on by a consuming avarice and cupidity, reap a golden harvest from their practices of villainy and fraud (C, 388, 455). Their minds not less than their bodies belong to the same type; their actions spring from like impulses; their purposes are formed and executed in a similar spirit. Only their fields of activity are different.<sup>27</sup> To Chaucer belongs great honor for having combined in the person and the tale of his Pardoner a complete psychological study of the mediaeval *eunuchus ex nativitate* and a mordant satire on the abuses practised in the church of his day.<sup>28</sup>

Considered in the light of the material presented in this investigation, certain problems which seem to have perplexed the critics become straightway clearer. After the Doctor has completed his pathetic account of Virginia, it will be remembered, the tender-hearted Host is so overcome with pity for the maid that he must either have a drink or listen to a merry tale to ease his pain of heart. He demands some "mirth or japes" from the Pardoner, who appears quite willing to accommodate



him. Instantly, and unexpectedly, a protest comes from the people of high rank:

Nay! lat him telle us of no ribaudye;  
Tel us some moral thing, that we may lere  
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here.  
(*C. T.*, C, 324).

Why should the "gentils" suppose that when the Host calls for a "merry tale," the Pardoner will relate a filthy or obscene story? Professor Kittredge is of the opinion that "what the Host wants is a ribald story" and that the gentlefolk are justified by their association with the noble "ecclesiaste," who is on his vacation, in expecting it.<sup>29</sup> As a matter of fact, however, neither a "merry tale" nor a "jape" is necessarily synonymous with a ribald story in Chaucer. Sir Thopas is a "tale of mirthe"; the extravaganza of Chauntecleer and Pertelote is called a "merry tale"; and the Host's little pleasantry regarding Chaucer's shapely figure is a "jape" (B, 1890). Nor is there any positive evidence which would indicate that the Pilgrims of high rank have had during the journey any close association whatever with the Pardoner. He has remained completely in the background up to this time. But now when he comes forward with alacrity at the call of the Host and speaks of seeking inspiration for his story in a near-by tavern, the gentlefolk, who are doubtless well acquainted with the current physiognomical lore,<sup>30</sup> recognise the type immediately. They are able instantly to translate his physical peculiarities into terms of character. What only

could be expected from a *eunuchus ex nativitate*? "Nay!" they cry, "let him tell us no ribald story."

The Pardoner's character having been given, however, Professor Kittredge's exposition of the dramatic fitness of his cynical confession and excellent tale is admirable (*Chaucer and his Poetry*, pp. 214 ff.). But that the reprobate, near the end of his story, is so overcome by the power of his own eloquence that he is betrayed into a moment of sincerity, is unbelievable. "The Pardoner," says Professor Kittredge, "has not always been an assassin of souls. He is a renegade, perhaps, from some holy order. Once he preached for Christ's sake; and now, under the spell of the wonderful story he has told and of recollections which stir within him, he suffers a very paroxysm of agonized sincerity." But it can last for only a moment. Regaining his wonted impudence after the unexpected "emotional crisis," he offers his pardons and relics for sale to the Pilgrims themselves, suggesting that the Host be first to come forward. Harry Baily, not understanding that the rascal has had a "moral convulsion," answers with a "rough jocularly" which precipitates the furious anger of the rebuffed Pardoner. It is, let us say, a beautiful theory. We should like to believe that even this "lost soul" may be touched by the beautiful and the tragic.

But unfortunately, knowing his secret as we now do, we are forced to a different interpretation of his concluding remark:

. . . and, lo, sirs, thus I preche.  
And Jesu Crist, that is our soules leche,

So graunte yow his pardon to receyve,  
For that is best; I wol yow nat decyve (C, 915).

We see in this only a preparation for his proposed master-stroke of deception. He has already revealed with amazing frankness the fraud which he is accustomed to practice upon his hearers; he has illustrated with eloquence and dramatic power the manner in which results are obtained in his profession. He is evidently proud of his skill. To hypnotize the Pilgrims into buying relics after he has declared their worthlessness and his own perfidy, would constitute the crowning success of his career. Turning suddenly to them, he says in effect: "Lo, sirs, this is the way I preach to *ignorant* people. But *you* are my friends; may God grant that *you* may receive the pardon of Jesus Christ; I would never deceive *you*! Come, now, and kiss this relic." This is, moreover, the correct manner in which to conclude a well-constructed oration; having no customary audience, he is compelled to make shift with an appeal to the Pilgrims themselves. But he reckons without his Host! That he should be taken for a fool somewhat angers the estimable inn-keeper, who replies in his momentary heat with a direct allusion to the Pardoner's infirmity:

I wolde I hadde thy coillions in myn hond  
In stede of relikes or of seintuarie.

It is small wonder that the Pardoner begins to redden at this unmannerly probing of his secret and that he should be speechless with rage when the Host continues with withering sarcasm and scorn,

Lat cutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie.

(*C. T.*, C, 951 ff.).

When we remember that the Pardoner is physically unfortunate, "*natus sine testiculis vel parvissimos habens*," this rude speech on the part of the Host seems to be something more than "rough jocularly." Again as the Flemings say, "Sooth pley, quaad pley." And to make matters worse the whole company laughs! The good-natured Host, however, declares he will not play with an angry man, and at the request of the Knight consents to make peace with a kiss. The incident is closed.

That the Pardoner is extremely sensitive upon the matter of his weakness is evidenced by his pathetic attempts to conceal it. He goes about singing in concert with the Summoner a gay little song, "Come hider, love, to me" (A, 672), and boasts with brazen affrontery that he will drink wine "And have a jolly wenche in every toun" (C, 453). He sings and brags like a real man; but one suspects that most of his *affaires d'amour* result in chagrin and disappointment like that in which he engages with Kitt the Tapster in the *Tale of Beryn*. It is significant that in this pseudo-Chaucerian story the "Pardoner" appears in his true colors. Recognising his weakness, the Tapster upon seeing him for the first time determines to make him her dupe. He is perfectly harmless, and she knows it. She leads him on, permits him to come into compromising situations with her, and finally hands him over to shameful treatment at the hands of her paramour.<sup>31</sup> At any

rate, Chaucer's Pardoner probably takes many of his potations of wine and ale in order to arouse an atrophied desire. He is almost as pitiable a figure as the aged January, who sits up late on the first night after his marriage with May, drinking strong wines hot with spices "t'encreesen his corage" (*C. T.*, E, 1807). Being feeble in body, though not necessarily entirely impotent, he permits his polluted imagination to revel in thoughts of lust and fleshly delights.

The physical stamina of the Wife of Bath has his unbounded admiration. Her eloquent sermon against virginity and in favor of the proper use of God-given powers of body for the promotion of carnal pleasures (*D*, 95-150) meets with his enthusiastic approval. He even interrupts her steady flow of language to applaud:

‘Now dame’, quod he, ‘by god and by seint John,  
Ye bee a noble prechour in this cas!’

(*C. T.*, D, 164).

There is one part of her discourse, however, which strikes him with panic. Being naturally of a passionate disposition, she affirms that her husband will always be her slave and thrall. He shall pay his debts, sanctioned by the Apostle, both morning and evening. As long as she shall be his wife, he must have tribulation of the flesh and must make his body subject in love to her desire (*D*, 150-160). This is too much for the Pardoner. If this is the true and proper relation between husband and wife, he has just escaped being plunged into a most horrible situation:

I was about to wedde a wyf; alas!  
What sholde I bye it on my flesh so dere?  
Yet hadde I lever wedde no wyf to-yere.  
(*C. T.*, D, 166 ff.)

At this unexpected interruption the Pilgrims do not even smile. Perhaps they remember his former anger and are content to let him play his little farce in peace. At any rate, this is the Pardoner's last boast. In it may be plainly seen his painful consciousness of his physical incompleteness and perhaps a bit of wistful sadness because of his misfortune.<sup>82</sup>

If this interpretation of the Pardoner's character has anything of truth in it, he is to be pitied rather than censured. Born a eunuch and in consequence provided by nature with a warped mind and soul, he is compelled to follow the urge of his unholy impulses into debauchery, vice, and crime. Being an outcast from human society, isolated both physically and morally, he satisfies his depraved instincts by preying upon it. His character is consistent throughout both with itself and with nature as described in the physiognomics. And Chaucer, the artist and man of deep human sympathy, has shown by the infinite care with which he has developed the Pardoner's character that he is able to appreciate, without judging too harshly, the point of view of even a *eunuchus ex nativitate*.



## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE REEVE AND THE MILLER

A MEDIAEVAL audience's comprehension of the personalities attributed to those delightful rascals, the Reeve and the Miller, must have been greatly facilitated by virtue of the fact that Chaucer has bodied them forth with the evident aid of physiognomical principles. It could not be maintained that the poet has created these personages mechanically according to certain rules and regulations known to his audience, but in presenting an exact correspondence between personal appearances and characters he has, while apparently detracting nothing from the lifelike qualities of the personalities introduced, succeeded in rendering them more vivid, natural, and significant to anyone with the mediaeval point of view.

Though the description of the Reeve's person is meager enough, it doubtless sufficed to indicate to the well informed men and women of the fourteenth century most of what Chaucer wanted to develop in the Reeve's character:

The Reve was a sclendre colerik man,  
His berd was shave as ny as ever he can,  
His heer was by his eres round y-shorn,  
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,  
Y-lyk a staf, there was no calf y-sene.

(*C. T.*, A, 587 ff.)

Now, may we ask again just what did these few items of personal appearance, perhaps only amusing to modern readers, signify to the mediaeval audience? The Reeve's custom of shaving his beard and of wearing his hair closely cropped need not detain us; it merely indicated in Middle English times a man of low caste or, more especially, an obedient and humble servant. This ostentatious display of humility affected by the Reeve was doubtless a part of his general programme of hoodwinking his young lord and of privately increasing his own store of goods; he could so "plesen subtilly" that, in addition to what he stole during the year, he had the confidence and thanks of his lord together with special gifts of coats and hoods besides. Everybody in Chaucer's time, it may be presumed, knew something about the four complexions of men, so that the artist thought it necessary to suggest only two characteristics of the choleric man in his description of the Reeve. The Middle English *Secreta Secretorum*, some version of which the poet certainly knew, has this to say: "The colerike (man) by kynde he sholde be lene of body; his body is light and drye, and he shal be sumwhat rogh; and lyght to wrethe and lyght to peyse; of sharpe witt, wyse and of good memorie, a greete entremyttere; he louth hasty wengeaunce; desyrus of company of women moore than hym nedyth."<sup>1</sup> A large part of the delineation of the Reeve's character, in the General Prologue, is taken up with illustrative material bearing out the fact that he is of "a sharpe witt, wyse, and of good memorie." He understands the art of husbandry; the raising of cattle, chickens, poultry, and swine is a

congenial and profitable occupation; and, it is said, he has been accustomed to tampering so skilfully with the annual reports made to his lord that, in spite of his rascality, no man might bring him in arrears. Many of the under-servants have known him for a thief all along, of course, but according to his choleric nature he is generally so "hasty" of his "wengeaunce" that they have maintained a discreet silence:

They were adrad of him as of the deeth (A, 595).

The Reeve is a choleric man and, therefore, cunning and crafty. So Chaucer presents him in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*.

When we come to the Reeve's Prologue, however, Oswald the Carpenter seems, upon first acquaintance, to be quite another man; at any rate, emphasis is there placed upon other, different elements of his character. Without further preparation, apparently, than the suggestion that "in his youth" he learned a good trade, we suddenly find that he is an old man, easily angered and as easily appeased, indulging in certain preachments upon old age and the follies of youth — to the disgust of the Host (*C. T.*, A, 3865). He is here revealed in his true colors; he is a lecher of the worst sort, a churl, a pitiful example of the burnt-out body in which there still lives a concupiscent mind. Youth with its follies is past; his hairs are white with age and perhaps from illicit association with women; <sup>2</sup> he is like rotten fruit. Yet he still boasts of having a "coltes tooth," and though the power to gratify his physical desires is gone, he still mentally hops to folly while the world pipes.

And worst of all he shamelessly publishes the viciousness of his imagination:

For in oure wil there stiketh ever a nayl,  
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl  
As hath a leek; for thogh our might be goon,  
Our wil desireth folie ever in oon,  
For when we may nat doon, than wol we speke;  
Yet in our asshen olde is fyr y-reke  
(*C. T.*, A, 3878 ff.).

This unexpected change in the character of the Reeve might well seem to be a serious blemish upon the poet's artistic workmanship; Oswald, an aged reprobate reveling in memories of follies committed in youth and prime, appears to come into direct conflict with the cunning and wide-awake Reeve of the General Prologue. But Chaucer is, for the most part, the conscious artist. Rightly understood, he rarely leaves out any element that might be considered essential to the unity and consistency of his characterizations. In the General Prologue — precisely where it should be — there is the emphatic statement that the Reeve has exceedingly small legs. This apparently innocent observation contains by implication most of what the poet later develops in the Reeve's hidden personality.

For it must be remembered that whenever Chaucer takes the trouble to impress upon his reader's notice the special physical peculiarities of his Pilgrims, we may rest assured that he intends for them to be straightway interpreted in terms of character. What, then, should small legs like those of the Reeve signify? The physiogno-

mists do not leave us in doubt. Aristotle himself affirms<sup>3</sup> that "whoever has thin, sinewy legs is luxurious or voluptuous by nature and is to be referred to birds." Polemon, the greatest and probably the father of most of the mediaeval physiognomists, is still more explicit in his discussion, "*De signis crurum*":<sup>4</sup> "And if, moreover, the legs are slender so that the tendons are visible, such persons should be judged as being given to much cupidity and lust." An anonymous author of the eleventh century — and a follower of Polemon — is of a like opinion:<sup>5</sup> "People who are of a white color and have slender legs as if the tendons were stretched are lustful and intemperate in their sensual desires"; and the Middle English *Secreta Secretorum* says that "tho men whyche haue smale legges and synowyne bene lushrus." When we remember, moreover, that one of the chief characteristics of the "colerik" man is that he is "Desyrous of the company of women moore than hym nedyth," it is apparent that Chaucer has made in the General Prologue ample preparation for the revelations which come in the Reeve's Prologue. His personal appearance betrays the Reeve to any ordinary observer — with the mediaeval point of view —, and his later confession need cause no surprise.

The Miller, indeed, takes his measure immediately. As Professor Tupper has already shown, the Miller and the Reeve are professional and traditional enemies;<sup>6</sup> it is even possible that they may have met before, it seems. At any rate, when the drunken Miller rises to a point of personal privilege and demands that he be permitted to "quyte the Knightes tale" with a story of a

cuckold carpenter and a faithless wife, the Reeve — who is also a “wel good wrighte” (A, 614) — recognizes that he is about to be attacked and voices a protest:

stint thy clappe,  
Lat be thy lewed drunken harlotrye.  
It is a sinne and eek a greet folye  
To apeiren any man, or him diffame,  
And eek to bringen wyves in swich fame (A, 3145).

The battle is on! The *Miller's Tale* is not so much an attack upon carpenters as a class as it is a direct thrust at this particular Reeve. And the ribald Miller has already divined the weak spot in the *amour propre* of his ancient enemy; namely, his advanced age. Professor Tupper says: “The obvious parallel between the Reeve and the victim of the Miller's Tale lies not in their common trade . . . but in their like cuckoldry, the traditional fate of eld mated with youth. The story . . . is eminently successful as a fabliau of futile jealousy of age.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the Miller in his description of the carpenter of the Tale is drawing material from his personal observations of the Reeve. In like manner, as we shall see later, the Reeve retaliates by attributing to the miller of *his* story personal characteristics which his enemy possessed, but which Chaucer has failed to put into the picture of his Miller in the General Prologue. Neither the Reeve nor the Miller, therefore, is complete without reference to his prototype. Since the whole of the Miller's Tale is a shaft aimed at the old age of the Reeve, we are prepared, as we should not otherwise have been, for the sermon which the latter



preaches in the Prologue to the *Reeve's Tale*. He is there angered that his feeble condition should have been held up to the ridicule of the whole company in such a manner; perhaps he is indeed a cuckold. At least he feels that he must defend himself, and in doing so he is betrayed into revealing his life of harlotry and into boasting that, though his hair is gray, he is still not so impotent and so worn out in doing "Venus workes" as he may seem. He still has a "grene tayl"; his "coltes tooth" is yet to be shed (A, 3865.). He proves himself guilty of three, at least, of the four Sins which he says "longen un-to elde": boasting, covetousness, and anger.

The mildness of his anger, however, is somewhat surprising when we remember that the under-servants at home are as afraid of him as of the pestilence. Chaucer says that most of the company laughed at the Miller's story, and that no man professed to find it unbearably obscene except Oswald:

A litel ire is in his herte y-laft,

He gan to grucche and blamed it a lyte (A, 3862).

As a matter of fact, Oswald is really what the physiognomists would list as a timid man. Aristotle writes that the "signs of a timid and faint-hearted man are these: soft hair, extreme weakness of the body, small legs, delicate members and joints, slim hands, and lank loins,"<sup>8</sup> to which the *Secreta Secretorum* might add that "longe leggis" indicate a man of "ill Complexioun." While the Reeve may rule with a tyrannical hand the underlings at home, he is, as his small legs indicate, a coward at heart; he is especially afraid of the bluster-

ing, bragging Miller, who rides blowing and sounding upon his bagpipe at the head of the "route" (A, 566). Consequently he withdraws himself from the other Pilgrims and no doubt from the Miller in particular and, as Chaucer says,

And ever he rood the hinderest of our route  
(A, 622).

Forced later to come into the very presence of his burly enemy, however, the Reeve discreetly represses his anger; he has only a "litel ire" in his heart and blames the Miller's tale only a "lyte." He could, if he wanted to speak of ribaldry, tell a story about a certain miller — but he is too old; "me list not pley for age" (A, 3865). And partly because his pride has been hurt, as we have seen already, but mostly because he is afraid of the Miller, Oswald launches forth into a sermon on old age in general and on his own sad case in particular. Under the circumstances, it is a neat and effective subterfuge. But being rallied by the Host, he allows his indignation to get the better part of prudence; he suddenly decides that, after all, he *will* tell "right in his cherles termes" a story about a proud miller called "deynous Simkin."

Nothing could be more natural than that the Reeve, who has just expressed the fervent wish that the Miller's neck might be broken (A, 3918), should give in the description of the unfortunate hero of his Tale items of character and personal appearance taken directly from the man who stands before him. Just as the carpenter of the *Miller's Tale* is none other than the Reeve him-

self, so far as age and cuckoldry are concerned, so the character and person of Simkin, in the first eighteen lines of the *Reeve's Tale*, are in reality those of the Miller. Both, it will be observed, are excellent wrestlers, proud boasters and swaggerers, and consummate harlots; both reap a rich harvest from the practice of bold theft. The Miller, therefore, as we shall discuss him, is a composite of Simkin and of Chaucer's *Canterbury Pilgrim*. Of him, as of Simkin, may be said:

Round was his face, and camuse was his nose.

As piled as an ape was his skulle (A, 3935).

And only when we consider these lines in connection with the description in the *General Prologue* can we gain an accurate and full picture of the Miller:

The Miller was a stout carl, for the nones,  
Ful big he was of braun and eek of bones . . .  
He was short-sholdered, brood, a thikke knarre,  
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre  
Or breke it, at a renning, with his heed.  
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.  
Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade  
A wert, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,  
Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres;  
His nose-thirles blake were and wyde . . .  
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys  
(A, 545 ff.).

To all of this must be added the fact that, in his duet with the Pardoner, he displays a deep bass voice (A, 672), which is otherwise called a "Pilates vois" (A, 3124).

In the above description I take "short-sholdered" to mean not only, as Professor Skeat suggests, "short in the forearms"; it evidently has reference also to the fact that the Miller's broad, knotty shoulders are square and high-upreared so that, his short bull-like neck scarcely appearing at all, the head seems to rest upon them. Of such a stocky figure Aristotle says: "The signs of a shameless and immodest man are vigorous shoulders raised upward, figure not erect but slightly bowed, rapid movements, a red body and sanguine complexion, a round face, and a chest thrust upwards." <sup>9</sup> Rasis, whom Chaucer certainly knew, also remarks: "The shameless man has elevated shoulders, a red complexion, round face; he is chicken-breasted and very garrulous." <sup>10</sup> Not only is a man of the Miller's build known to be shameless, immodest, and loquacious, according to the physiognomists as in Chaucer, but he is apparently bold and easily angered. Says Aristotle: "The signs of an irascible person are these: a broad figure with shoulders large and wide, powerful and strong extremities, a courageous appearance, and a florid complexion," <sup>11</sup> to which Rasis adds that "He is a bold man whose hair is coarse and bristly and whose figure is erect, bones large, and limbs and ribs strong. His chest is well-developed, his stomach protruding, shoulders broad, his neck strong and thick. Such a person is clearly wrathful, always conserving his wrath." <sup>12</sup> Our anonymous author would say that the Miller might be referred to the bull, because "The Bull is an animal having a large head, wide mouth, broad nostrils, and gross flanks. . . . Men who are referred to this species

of animal are violent, lacking in wisdom, base in speech and action, fit to be ruled rather than to rule.”<sup>13</sup> Already it appears from these passages that a man of the Miller’s figure and with his round face, sanguine complexion, and red, bristly beard, his short neck, great mouth, and broad nostrils may be pronounced upon sight a man easily angered, shameless, loquacious, and apt to stir up strife. So Chaucer presents his Miller:

He was a janglere and a goliardeys,  
And that was most of sinne and harlotryes (A, 560).

We have already seen how, in his drunkenness, he thrusts himself forward immediately after the Knight to tell his tale, and how he picks a quarrel with the Reeve.

But it is only from a study of these physical traits in detail that we are able to get the full significance of them in terms of character. Of short arms, such as the Miller has, the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum* says, “If the arms are short, the possessor of them is a friend of evil and foolish, being of evil understanding and wicked in his practices.”<sup>14</sup> Nor does the Middle English *Secreta Secretorum* dissent: “Whan the shuldres bene moche vprerid, thei tokenyth orribill kynde and vntrouthe; . . . and whan the armes bene ful shorte thay tokenyth lowe of dyscorde.” Nor must the bull-like neck be left out of consideration in connection with the item “short-shouldered,” for as Rasis has it, “He who has a neck thick and strong and hard is wrathful and hasty,”<sup>15</sup> or according to the *Secreta Secretorum*, “a crafty trickster, astute, deceitful, and voracious,” or

in the words of the M. E. *Secreta Secretorum*, "a fole and a gloton, a gyloure and a decyuoure."

This most unfortunate Miller has, moreover, a round face (probably fleshy, with puffed-out cheeks) covered with a red, bushy beard. Of such a face Aristotle says, "Those who have a fleshy face are easily aroused to lust";<sup>16</sup> Polemon affirms that "If there is much flesh in the cheeks it signifies drunkenness and baseness";<sup>17</sup> the author of the *Secreta Secretorum* continues, "A man fleshy in the face is impudent, ignorant, untruthful, foolish, and of a gross nature";<sup>18</sup> and the M. E. *Sec. Sec.* concludes that "who-so hath a face ouer fleshy and ouer grete, he is vnvyse, enuyous, a lyar, and bene dysposyd to consupyscence of fleschy lustes." (P. 228.) This estimate of the Miller's character is further borne out by the physiognomical interpretation of his red beard. As the M. E. *Sec. Sec.* has it, "Tho that bene red men, bene Parceuyngre and trechus, and full of queyntise, i-liknyd to Foxis," which may contain some explanation of Chaucer's description, "His berd as any sowe or fox was reed." As far back as the time of the *Proverbs of Alfred* this distrust of the red man, i.e., *rufus*, *subrufus*, is felt and expressed:

- þe rede mon he is quede  
for he wole þe þin iwil rede,  
he is a cocher, þef and horeling,  
Scolde, of wrechedome is king (702 ff.).

In the description of the Miller's skull the term "piled" is defined incorrectly by Professor Skeat, who says that it means "deprived of hair, very thin." Rather



Chaucer intends to say probably that the hair of the Miller's head is thick (most likely bristly), and especially that it comes far down over his wide, "villainous low" forehead. (See the picture of the Miller from the Ellesmere MS.) It is such a head and forehead as Giraldus Cambrensis attributes to the wicked Geoffrey, Archbishop of York, who is said to have had "a large head with the hair extending, like that of an ape, over the forehead even to his eyelids."<sup>19</sup> This quotation explains quite clearly, it seems to me, the meaning of Chaucer's "piled as an ape." Our anonymous author on physiognomy informs us that one of the signs of the proud-minded man is "hair of the head coming far down upon the forehead," and continues with the information that "thick hair overhanging the forehead declares an excessively base mind."<sup>20</sup> What he is trying to say, I think, is better expressed by a later writer, Richard Saunders — of whom more anon — in his discussion of the man with a depressed and low forehead: "For a man that is so," says he, "hath a low and abject soul, is fearful, surville . . . cowardly, and carried away with many words of a great talker, for there is not much assurance in his words, yet he is overcome by the speech of the most simple man that he stands in fear of."<sup>21</sup> From these indications we learn that, in spite of his enormous physical strength, his jangling and babbling, and for all his boasting, the Miller is still a bully, a coward at heart. For, it must be observed, when his blustering demand to be heard in the rôle of story-teller calls forth a display of considerable animus on the part of the Host (A, 3135), he is quick to ac-

knowledge with a show of weakening courage that he is drunk (A, 3138); and when so slender a man as the Reeve protests against his telling a libelous tale about a carpenter and a faithless wife, he hastens to mollify the irate little man with gentle assurance of his absolute faith in — or perhaps his indifference to — the chastity of married women (A, 3151 ff.). He would not for the world cast reflections upon the Reeve or upon any woman; why should “leve brother Oswald” be angry with him (A, 3157)! His braggardism has received a sharp and effective check. With respect to his strength, the Miller may indeed be “referred” to the bull; but with respect to his low forehead, he must be referred to the ape, which is “an animal malignant, ridiculous, and base.” The man who is referred to the ape, says Goclenius, “is likely to be given to scurrility and dissimulation.”<sup>22</sup>

That a mouth as large as a “greet forneys” is sufficient to brand the Miller as a glutton, a swaggerer, a sensualist, and an impious fornicator who might be expected to swear by God’s “armes and by blood and bones” (A, 3125), is attested by the best physiognomists. “He who has a large mouth,” say Rasis and others, “is pugnacious, gluttonous, audacious; breadth of mouth and thickness of lips signify desire and voracity of the stomach, while at the same time their possessor is harmful and clearly irreverent. A large mouth, which is as it were deep-set, is vicious and is the index of the love of ill-will and of murder, and of lust and copulation.”<sup>23</sup> Saunders, as usual, states the matter in clear and picturesque English: “He that hath a greet and broad

mouth is shameless, a great babler and liar, a carrier of false tales, very foolish, impudent, courageous, but perfidious withal. . . . Indagine and Corvus say, they were never deceived by this sign.”<sup>24</sup> Nor does this sign fail in the case of the Miller. His “*Pilates vois*” is, moreover, still another indication of an evil and malignant nature. According to Aristotle and others the man who has a great, rough voice is “injuriously, lawless, the servant of his own stomach, wrathful and hasty, and of an evil nature, performing wicked deeds gladly.”<sup>25</sup> The Miller’s deep, rumbling voice must be carefully distinguished from the loud, sonorous voice such as has Emetrius, King of Inde:

His voys was as a trompe thunderinge (A, 2174).

For as Polemon tells us, “When you hear a deep, grave, sonorous voice, you may attribute to the owner of it great agility and bravery, sincerity and truthfulness.”<sup>26</sup>

Chaucer seems to be quite aware of the fact that, of all parts of the body, the nose is a most infallible indicator of character. He is careful, therefore, to tell us that the Miller’s nose is “*camuse*,” i.e., flat, low and concave, a pug-nose, with wide distended nostrils, and with an unsightly wart on the top in which there is a tuft of red hairs. Such an ape-like nose, say the physiognomists, indicates “lustfulness, desire for coition, and a love of things Venerian.”<sup>27</sup> All of the physiognomists further agree that the man with wide open nostrils is easily angered — “For whan a man angryth his noose thurles oppenyth” —, that he is a jangler, a liar, and given to filthy luxurious practices.<sup>28</sup> Any discus-

sion of the Miller's wart, however, must necessarily lead us into a consideration of that division of physiognomy known generally to the Middle Ages as metoposcopy, which, in addition to treating of the significance of the lines of the forehead corresponding to the celestial bodies, deals with warts, moles, and other natural marks found upon the face. It is based, as are the kindred sciences of geomancy and chiromancy, together with the science of dreams and medicine, upon astrology. That Chaucer's knowledge of medicine, in its technical as well as in its astrological aspects, was wider and more accurate than critics once supposed,<sup>29</sup> we have already demonstrated in our discussion of the Doctor of Physic; and that he was also well acquainted with the "symmetrical proportions and signal moles of the body," is revealed in his description of the Miller's wart. From the time of Ptolemy on down to the age of Chaucer, I understand, astrologers were accustomed to "attribute" to the various planets sundry corresponding parts of the human body: to the Sun, for example, the nerves, the sinews, and the brain; to Jupiter, the hands, the liver, and the blood; and, what concerns us especially at this point, to Venus, the nose, the mouth, and the corresponding instruments of generation.<sup>30</sup> A full discussion of this question may be found in the works of Albohazen Haly, or of Baptista Porta, or of Cardan,<sup>31</sup> or of the Grecian Melampus, or of Mr. Richard Saunders. Now this Saunders, who has apparently familiarized himself with the works of most of the above-mentioned ancient writers, seems to be the authority *par excellence* on all things physiognomical, chiromantical, metoposcopical, a

self-styled "student of astrology and physic," *semetipissimum*. He complains of his sources that they were so "depraved with manual Errors, that no light of truth could I derive from these Fountains; but whatsoever shews of truth did therein appear, I have found them rather mistaken fallacies than real verities." But after sifting all the material at his disposal and comparing it with his own personal observations, he at last arrives at the truth of the whole matter.

We are interested, therefore, to hear what Saunders has to say about warts on the nose. "Now let us treat of the Nose," says he, "which, as before I observed, relates to the Genitals or Secrets. When a Mole is on the root of the Fore-head, in the hollow between the Nose and the Fore-head, there is another on the Fore-skin of the flesh; but Haly saith, a Mole on the Fore-head another on the stones; but he explains not in what part of the Forehead, when as he means the lower part of the Forehead, next the beginning of the Nose. Haly again saith, He which hath a Mole or mark on the Nostril, hath another on the privy parts on the circumference of the genitals, and another on the ribs and that side of the breast; but by the nostrils there should be understood the top of the nose; but I attribute this mistake to his interpreter, who might easily mistake the *Arabick*, and render *Naris* for *Nasus*. Melampus renders judgment that if a Mole appear on the Nose or near the eye, that person is beyond measure Venereal . . . ; a Mole on the Nostrils gives another on the Stones, between which and the nostrils there is great sympathy."<sup>32</sup> We are delighted to get these opinions

of Haly, no doubt Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel, a noted astrologer of the eleventh century, and to note the trifling nature of the "manual Errors" of which he stands convicted, because we may now accept Saunders as a more or less accurate authority on the science as it must have been understood in Chaucer's time. He is correct, moreover, in his quotation from Melampus, who says, "If the mark is on the nose of a man, and if the color of it is yellowish, then he will be insatiable in love; you may say also that there is another mark in a secret place."<sup>33</sup> And this reminds us of the fact that Chaucer knows what he is about when he makes the Wife of Bath own to having somewhere about her person "the prente of sēynte Venus seel" (D, 604), and, on account of having been born when Taurus was in the ascendent with Mars posited in it, lament:

Yet have I Martes mark up-on my face,  
And also in another privee place (D, 619).

But let us return to the Miller's wart. The exact location of it is, for an interpretation of the Miller's character, of considerable importance. Chaucer says, "Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade a werte," which may be interpreted in either of two ways: it is right on top, i.e., directly or exactly on top (or, for aught I know, on the very point), or on top of the nose a little to the right side. I am inclined to think that Chaucer had the latter meaning in mind when he wrote the passage. But in either case the significance of it is not flattering to the Miller. "If the mark (or mole) is placed on the middle of the nose," says Melampus,



“ it signifies that a man because of women, or a woman because of men, shall be subject to homicides and given to shameful fornication.” <sup>34</sup> Saunders is still more explicit: “ A mole in a man or a woman appearing under the very point of the Nose toward the middle . . . describes another on the fore part of the Privy member, and denotes the man to be inclined to filthy infamous luxury, and subject to a violent gout, or worse, which he gets by women’s company; . . . if it appear red, he is principally pained in the extreme parts of his body, as Hands, Arms, Legs, and Feet . . . ; if it appear as a Lentil (i.e., a wart), he is in most danger of the secret Privy parts; let him take heed thereof.” <sup>35</sup> If the wart or mark is on the top of the nose, a little to the right, Melampus says: “ Always, if the mark is placed on the middle of the nose and on the right side, it produces quarrels and miseries between the sexes.” <sup>36</sup> Saunders again assents, adding further complications: “ A man or woman having a Mole on top of the bridge of the Nose, inclining to the right side a little, indicates another on the top of the Yard or privy member, and discovers the man to be an enemy to his own peace, to sow discord between himself and his wife; . . . if it appear of a honey colour, contentious brawlings shall most perplex him; if red, he is most afflicted with envious hostility; if it is like a wart or Lentil, he is a principal Artificer in his calling.” <sup>37</sup> And finally, as to the red tuft of hairs that stands out from the Miller’s wart, Saunders would probably say, “ He that hath the nose hairy at the point, or above, is a person altogether simple hearted.” <sup>38</sup>

From the material presented in this chapter we may

safely deduce the obvious conclusion, I think, that in the creation of the Reeve and Miller Chaucer has made ample use of the science of physiognomy. The character of the Reeve is made to seem a consistent and unified whole when his personal appearance is interpreted, and the Miller's dissolute and abandoned personality is to be realized in full only by reference to the physiognomical significance of his physical peculiarities. The real Miller is presented in large measure by suggestion. Chaucer expresses, indeed, some compunction of conscience at being compelled to delineate so much of the Miller's character as he does (A, 3170); but he is not backward in heaping up bodily signs, which to the initiated speak louder than words. When it appears that the Host is finally unable to dissuade dear brother Robin — whom we now know to be much worse at heart than Chaucer has described him in so many words — from telling his filthy story, the poet reluctantly and with some misgivings, apparently, concludes to rehearse "his cherles tale in his manere." "And therefore I pray every gentle person," says he, "for God's love, not to judge that I speak with evil intent, but that I must rehearse all their tales, be they better or worse, or else falsify some of my matter. And therefore whoever does not want to hear it, let him turn over the leaf and choose another tale; for he shall find enough of other stories dealing with gentility and morality and holiness. Do not blame me if you choose amiss."

The Miller is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;  
So was the Reve, and othere many mo,  
And harlotrye they tolden bothe two (A, 3171 ff.).

## CHAPTER FIVE

## THE WIFE OF BATH

HE who would enter upon anything like an adequate explanation of the remarkably complex and contradictory character of Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* must expect heavenly guidance and receive aid from the stars. Though one may not be entirely prepared to accept the opinion that she "is one of the most amazing characters . . . the brain of man has ever conceived,"<sup>1</sup> still she is so vividly feminine and human, so coarse and shameless in her disclosures of the marital relations with five husbands, and yet so imaginative and delicate in her story-telling, that one is fascinated against his will and beset with an irresistible impulse to analyze her dual personality with the view of locating, if possible, definite causes for the coexistence of more incongruent elements than are ordinarily found in living human beings. When I first proposed casting the *Wife of Bath's* horoscope, it was with the supposition that rules of natural astrology might be used exclusively in the interpretation of certain data, concerning planets and their influence, which Chaucer has furnished us; but it is not entirely so. In the full presentation of the *Wife's* "fortune" — her character, personal appearance, and the location and significance of mysterious "marks" about her body — constant reference must be made to what the mediae-

val mind believed to be truths found in the "sciences" of celestial physiognomy, metoposcopy, and perhaps of geomancy.

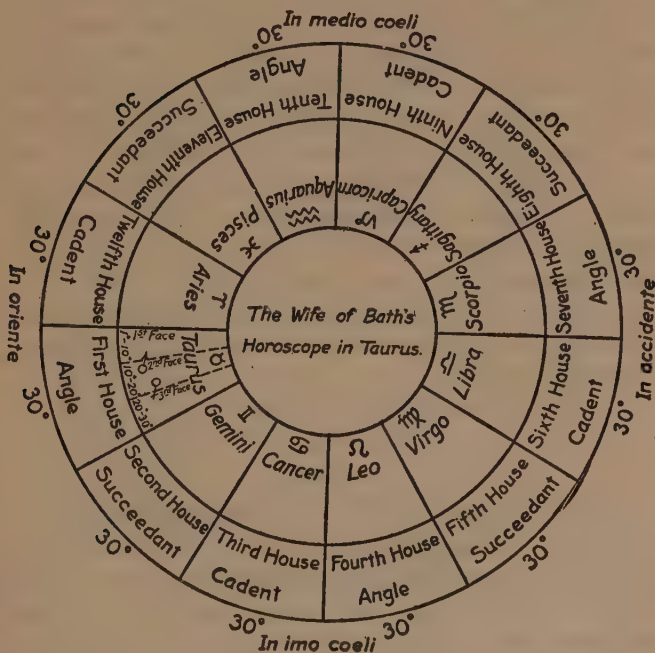
That startling revelation of a woman's experiences in love, the Wife of Bath's Prologue, reaches its climax, I suppose, at the point where Jankin, the unsophisticated clerk of twenty, is selected by Dame Alisoun, aged forty, to fill the recently vacated place and to take up the labors of her fourth husband who has just been packed off to the church-yard. She has wept a little for decency's sake, it will be remembered, and has worn the mourning veil for at least a month out of respect for custom; but her heart has never been in the grave of her husband. Even while following the bier, she tells us, she kept an appraising eye upon the excellent shape of Jankin's leg — she always had a "coltes tooth."

Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel;  
I hadde the prente of sēynt Venus seel.  
As help me god, I was a lusty oon,  
And feire and riche, and yong, and wel bigoon . . .  
For certes, I am al Venerien  
In felling, and myn herte is Marcien.  
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,  
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardinesse.  
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars thereinne.  
Allas! alas! that ever love was sinne!  
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun  
By vertu of my constellacioun;  
That made me I coude noght withdrawe  
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.  
Yet have I Martes mark up-on my face,  
And also in another privee place

(*C. T.*, D, 600 ff.).

Now from this passage it appears that, to the mind of Chaucer, the cause of Dame Alisoun's peculiarly contradictory character lies not so much in herself as in her stars; possibly she is not to be held morally responsible

PLATE IV



for all her actions. For at her birth the sign Taurus, one of the "houses" or "mansions" <sup>2</sup> of Venus, is said to have been in the ascendent over the horizon, hers being what the exponents of natural astrology would

call "the horoscope in Taurus." Her dominant star or ruling planet is Venus — she speaks proudly of the wisdom taught her by "my dame," the love-star (D, 575) <sup>3</sup> — which, being posited and at home in its own house Taurus, may be considered "well-dignified" or particularly beneficent in aspect toward the "native." Most unfortunately, however, the combined good influence of the ascendent sign and the dominant star is vitiated by the presence in perhaps platic conjunction of Mars, one of the most "malefic" and evil of planets (see Plate IV). Both Mars and Venus — and if one may put faith in astrologers, the sign Taurus — have left their "marks" upon her body as well as upon her character. With one eye upon this configuration of stars and with the other upon mediaeval astrological and physiognomical lore, which must have been familiar to Chaucer, <sup>4</sup> let us read and interpret the Wife of Bath's horoscope.

## II

Mediaeval astrologers are exceedingly careful in setting up and in drawing figures of the heavens representing horoscopes in all the various signs of the zodiac. Ioannes Taisnier finds that, when Taurus is just rising *in oriente*, Aquarius is discovered *in medio coeli*, Scorpio *in occidente*, and Leo *in imo coeli*, and shows what particular influence each sign in this position exerts upon the native:

"If the horoscope is in Taurus (says he), it may be interpreted in this manner: the native shall be an industri-



ous person, prudent, energetic in acquiring wealth, gaining and losing it with ease, triumphing over enemies.

"Aquarius *in medio coeli* assures favor with princes and presages public acts and offices, perhaps affairs which have to do with water, since this sign is of a watery nature.

"Scorpio *in occidente* indicates that the native will be sagacious, serviceable, and dutiful; he shall lose his wife, if he be masculine, and, if feminine, she shall be deprived of her husband and son.

"Leo *in imo coeli* assures the appropriation of inheritances, which shall be gained in spite of insidious obstacles and the claims of children born after the will was made." <sup>5</sup>

So far one may follow with some confidence the technical directions of natural astrology, but no farther; Chaucer has failed to give data concerning the exact positions of sun and moon, and has not indicated the exact hour of the day — whether morning, afternoon, or night — and the day of the year of the nativity in question, all of which is absolutely necessary. But writers on metoposcopy are not silent regarding the supposed influence of Taurus on women — and men — born under that sign. For example, Philippi Finella says:

"When Taurus is discovered in the ascendent, the woman born under that sign shall be exceedingly large of face and forehead, rather fleshy with a great number of lines or wrinkles, especially in the forehead, and florid of complexion. She shall have bold eyes, a mobile head inclined more to the right than to the left side,

long black hair widely spread over broad shoulders and breast. She shall be slow in her movements, but equipped to perform a maximum of labor with a minimum of aversion. When the first face of Taurus is in the ascendent, she shall be lightly given to affairs of the heart, having a lover for the greater part of her life; often in her amorous affairs she is followed by the reproach of her parents. . . . She shall be inconstant, changeable, speaking (or gossiping) with fluency and volubility, now to this one now to that. . . . This sign shall give her a mole or mark on the neck near its juncture with the shoulders; when this mark is located on the right side, a happy fate may be conjectured, but if on the left side one may reasonably predict dangers. . . . When the line of Venus is observed to be joined to that of Mars, she shall be exceedingly virile, and sagacious in matrimony.”<sup>6</sup>

A later writer concerning these matters assures us that “those born under Taurus are of a cold and dry constitution, inclined to melancholy; one that loves pleasure; . . . once provoked, seldom reconciled; of short stature, but well set; short legs, big buttocks, a bull’s neck, wide mouth, and black hair.”<sup>7</sup> And the most scholarly of the students of celestial physiognomy, Baptista Porta, reporting faithfully the opinions of Albohazen Haly, Maternus, and Leopoldus, presents in a passage too long to quote, “*De Tauri formae constitutione, moribus, & physicis rationibus*,”<sup>8</sup> much the same conclusions as those cited above.

Still fuller and far more detailed are the prognostications which may be made with certainty regarding the

physical form and the disposition of those so fortunate as to be born when Venus, posited in either of her two houses, Taurus and Libra, is the ruling star in a nativity. In a passage headed "*De Veneris forma ad Astrologis descripta*," Porta records the following: "Venus mistress of a nativity (says Maternus) gives to the native a tall, elegant, white body, pleasing eyes sparkling with splendid beauty, and thick hair agreeably fluffy and sometimes curly or charmingly waving. Venus is similar to Jupiter (says Haly) except that it is her particular province to bestow more charm, greater beauty, and a better conceived, more finely formed, and more alluring and seductive body (seeing that Venus is responsible for that grace and elegance peculiar to women); a woman so born is milder and gentler. Others say that she is frail and slender, having dark eyes, delicate eyebrows joined together, tender lips, a full face, a magnificent breast, short ribs, well developed thighs; her general appearance is most attractive, and her figure is refined and elegant. She wantons with her eyes, believing this to be attractive; and her hair is somewhat curly. And Messahala says she has black eyes, in which the dark appears more than in those of other people, beautiful hair, and a face becomingly round and plump but not too full." <sup>9</sup>

Nor does the same author leave us in doubt as to the exact disposition and character of the person born when Venus reigns well-dignified and undisturbed by evil influences in the ascendent sign Taurus. In the section called "*Mores quos Venus largiatur*" he continues quoting from his authorities:

“When Venus is the ruling influence in a nativity (says Haly), alone and in a favorable position, the native will be quiet and gentle in disposition, morally upright in character and not in the least depraved or wicked, reflecting always upon right things. She loves to dance and sing, abhors brawls, disputes, and contentions of all kinds; she delights in dictatorships and intrigues, fine forms and good manners, in truthfulness, and in delicate fancies. She succeeds in making herself loved and esteemed by men; and since she is a devout and pious person engaged in doing right, she is fortunate and happy. Venus makes her children attractive (Maternus agrees), joyous and cheerful of disposition, devoid of constant debaucheries or even of excesses, worthy of love, agreeable, affable, and altogether charming. They are usually lovers of the opposite sex, passionate and voluptuous by nature but religious and righteous. They drink much and eat little; they have a good digestion, which provokes passion and an ardent desire for coition — but they are noble in life and cleanly in act. They cleave with delight to the spirit and practice of music and the arts. They rejoice in sweet-scented baths and in perfumes and fragrances of all kinds, and in poetry inspired by the Muses enriched by choral dance and song. They have finely formed figures, especially the young women, achieve many amatory affairs and happy weddings; temperamental by nature, they show displeasure easily and indulge in complaints, employ crafty devices, and refresh themselves by a return to peace and affection. They have a mutual esteem, the one for another, a fine sense of duty, a ready

faith, and a supremacy in good breeding, refinement, and kindliness of heart. Venus makes singers and charming people (says Haly further), ardent lovers of flowers and elegance, taking great care of their fine bodies and splendid, delicate skin and complexion. They are strenuously diligent in the propagation of offspring and in the perpetuation of the race, but are religious and sympathetic. They delight in feminine ornaments and are given to adorning their bodies with elegant and smart attire, most often white in color, have the genteel manners of a courtier, and take pleasure in luxurious flavors and savors. They easily become rulers, performing whatever they undertake with facility. They are given to games and various diversions, to laughter and joyous living, rejoicing in the companionship of friends and in eating and drinking, relying upon others to the point of being often deceived. They are benevolent and utter soft and gentle-voiced words with a small, sweet mouth; they are tender by nature and prone to shed tears." <sup>10</sup>

To this significant passage may be added a pertinent excerpt from the four full pages which Helvetius devotes to the same subject. "They like to wander and sojourn in strange lands" says he "in order that they may enjoy the acclaim of foreign peoples or be accounted cosmopolitan. They love smart, elegant wearing apparel of white, blue, and even black materials, and jewelry of Phrygian workmanship made of gold, silver, and precious stones for the adornment of their bodies, according to their conception of style and length of purse. In practices and experiences of love, however, they often exceed the measure of good form, and as ex-

hibited in secret their (amatory) services are eager, exceedingly ardent, and glowing with passion. In the marriage relations they are to a high degree volatile, capricious, and inconstant, especially when they are not maintained sumptuously and in grand style; and they are certainly more contented and happy if they are permitted as many separations and divorces as there are numbered principles of love. Their amorous actions bring it about that, while they serve themselves by deceptions and cajoleries, they are pleasing and attractive at the same time, forcing the fascinated will of the lover to surrender.”<sup>11</sup> And still further items may be gleaned from Indagine’s account of the influence of Venus when she dominates in the roots of nativities of phlegmatic natures.—and she is found only in such nativities: “Venus makes her children playful, passionate, joyous, beautiful, loving and fearing God, just; . . . they shall be great drinkers, musicians, players upon musical instruments, and singers. They will love the manual arts, such as painting and other things which are made neatly and without sweepings.”<sup>12</sup>

I have ventured to give at considerable length these prognostications regarding the influence of Venus in Taurus, because in any correct interpretation of Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath* it is necessary that one realize what she might have been. Such a fascinating personal appearance and attractive disposition might have been assured her at birth<sup>13</sup> had not fate—or perhaps her creator—decreed that she should sink i’ the scale by virtue of the malignant influence of the war-planet, Mars, at that time in platic conjunction with Venus in



Taurus. At the conclusion of a long discussion of the beauty and charm of one born under the dominion of Venus, Indagine remarks: "But if Mars mingles his occult influence with hers, he changes all these prognostications into vain words and lies, and into that which is according to his nature."<sup>14</sup> Let us consider, therefore, the power and nature of Mars.

All the writers on these occult matters whom I have consulted agree with convincing unanimity that Mars, either in his own houses or in those of other planets, is a powerful worker of evil. Porta, in his discussion of Mars in the various zodiacal signs, quotes Haly and Maternus as follows: "Mars in the third face of Taurus (says Haly) gives a form marvelously foul and ugly, and a repulsive countenance; the native shall be a jester, delighting in merriment, incantations, and vices. If Mars is discovered anywhere in Taurus (says Maternus) the native shall be most loathsome of aspect, given to jesting continually, also greedy and rapacious, rash, reckless, criminal, rejoicing in causing unhappiness."<sup>15</sup> And Taisnier, adding further harrowing details, is in substantial agreement: "When Mars is found in the house of Venus (e.g., in Taurus), the native shall be voluptuous and a fornicator, perpetrating wickedness with women of his own blood, becoming guilty of incest, or committing adultery with women whom he has seduced by promises of marriage; he shall suffer damages and loss because of women. If Mars is posited in Taurus particularly, it signifies that all voluptuousness and wickedness shall be combined."<sup>16</sup> Still, one is delighted to learn that the case of a phlegmatic nature —

such as that of the Wife of Bath — is not so desperate as that of the melancholic and the choleric: "Mars in the nativity of a phlegmatic nature" says Indagine "is evil enough; he produces a native with a mean and violent disposition, strong, adventurous, a great babbler and liar. He burns the hair on the top of the head, makes the face coarse, enlarges the head; the native shall be cruel, casting his eyes aside, exceedingly courageous, a boaster, a traitor, fiery, arrogant, a maker of noises, a pillager, a beater of people, slayer of his father and mother, worthy of being beaten himself, and secretly boresome to his friends. Nevertheless all these characteristics are not so strongly marked in the phlegmatic as in melancholic and choleric natures, because the phlegmatic humour foams and cools the heat." <sup>17</sup>

Thus the power of Mars, situated alone in Taurus or posited at all in the nativities of phlegmatic natures, is exerted for evil; but when he mingles his influence with that of Venus, the situation is, according to Guido Bonatus and Cardan, indeed deplorable: "He that has Mars in his ascendante shall be exposed to many dangers, and commonly at last receives a great scar in his Face. When Mars is Lord of a Woman's Ascendant, and Venus is posited in it, or Venus is Lady of it, and Mars in it . . . 'tis more than probable that she will Cuckold her Husband. When Venus shall be too powerful in a Geniture, and in place of the Infortunes (i.e., in conjunction with Mars, for example), inconveniences are to be feared from unlawful Loves. If in a Woman's nativity Mars shall be under the Sun Beams, she will be apt to play the Harlot with her Servants

and mean fellows; but if Venus be there, then she will trade discreetly with nobles and Gallants of Quality.”<sup>18</sup> And William Lilly has it that “Mars with Venus denote the Wife full of spirit, movable, an ill Housewife, prodigall, and that the native is or will be an Adulterer.”<sup>19</sup> But it is Albohazen Haly who gives the best account of the combined influences of Mars and Venus in good and bad positions: “If Mars is in harmony with Venus and in a good position (says he), they create a native who is in agreement with men, one who is credulous but a deceiver of friends, one who loves a vicious and depraved life. Such a native delights in quiet simplicity and loves to sing and dance. He is a reveler, is transported by love, and has unlawful and sinful relations with the opposite sex; he is sensitive, a mocker and a deceiver, but none the less happy, a deep thinker, a waster, easily angered. But if these planets are in positions opposite to that of which we have spoken (e.g., in conjunction in Taurus), they make the native of a passionate disposition, desiring to lie with women without any consideration or sense of shame, seeing that he is exceedingly irresponsible in his actions; he is meretricious, a dishonorer, a teller of lies, and a deceiver of friends and others; successful in satisfying his desires, seducing and corrupting good women and virgins, wise in perpetrating frauds and betrayals. He is a perjurer, a scoffer and reviler, a reprobate in habits of thought, busily engaged in conceiving corrupt acts and in the practice of abominable fornication.”<sup>20</sup> So far as the personal appearance of the native is concerned, however, Maternus is of the opinion that “When Mars

participates with Venus in a nativity, he lays aside the utmost ardor of his evil. The person born when Mars is in conjunction with Venus has a complexion pleasingly red mixed with white; a face rounded but not too full with cheeks appropriately plump; lovely eyes a little too dark for greatest beauty but not black enough to be called ugly; a becomingly medium stature; and a body not fat to the point of being obese but, as one might say, semi-fat.”<sup>21</sup> Such a person one might expect the Wife of Bath to be.

Not all the astro-physiognomical material that may aid in the correct interpretation of her constellation has been presented, however, until some explanation has been offered of the mysterious “prente of sēynt Venus seel,” located somewhere about her person, and of “Martes mark” which is found upon her face and “also in another privee place.” What is the nature of these “marks,” and precisely where are they placed? It is a marvellous truth, we are told by the celestial physiognomists,<sup>22</sup> that every human being has printed upon his body, at the hour of conception or perhaps at birth, the “mark” of at least the ascendent sign and of the dominant star which are supposed to rule his fortunes. These marks are found in those parts of the body that are referred or “attributed” to the various signs and planets; and whether they are placed before, behind, or to the left or right side depends upon the “face”<sup>23</sup> of the sign just appearing above the horizon. If there should be another planet in conjunction, moreover, and if the Sun should be in the ascendent, then the native will have an additional set of marks on those parts of

the body which correspond to these stars. Thus it comes about that a person may have four marks, each one of which may possibly be duplicated in another place. The mark of the ascendent sign, it must be observed, is usually the highest, that of the Sun lower — if he happens to be rising —, that of the dominant star still lower, and that of the planet in conjunction lowest of all.

For example, the Wife of Bath's horoscope is in Taurus, but Chaucer has unfortunately neglected to inform us as to which face of the sign was in the ascendent at the time of her birth. We may locate, therefore, the mark of this sign somewhere on the neck; but whether it is on the throat, or on the side, or on the nape of the neck cannot be determined. M. Belot says in this connection: "When a person is born under the sign Taurus, he has a mark on the neck; if the first face, which the Arabians call *Adoldaya*, is just rising, the mark is found upon the throat in the form of a small strawberry or of a little red spot something like the foot-print of a cat; this is an evil sign. If the person is born under the second face of the sign, i.e., from ten to twenty degrees, the mark is on one of the two sides of the neck; and if he is born under the third face of the sign, the mark is on the back of the neck, but in this case it is most often in the form of a small bulbus mole."<sup>24</sup> Le Sievre de Pervchio furnishes additional information and interpretation: "The head of Taurus (from one to ten degrees) dominates in the middle of April; its mark is impressed upon the neck in the form of a red spot, denoting birth in that season.

It indicates a person courageous, honest, endowed with a lovable disposition, but given to anger and lasciviousness, having a good color and long hair. . . . The heart of Taurus (from ten to twenty degrees) presides at the end of April and places its mark upon the side of the neck. . . . The tail of Taurus (from twenty to thirty degrees) is powerful at the beginning of May, at which time are born those who have the mark on the back of the neck.”<sup>25</sup> And Rosa Baughan says that “When Taurus is rising at birth, the native bears a mark in the front of the throat; sometimes in the form of a raspberry or red-coloured mole, which mark is always ill in its effects.”<sup>26</sup> Since there is no indication in Chaucer’s text of the relation of the Sun to the Wife of Bath’s constellation, one may safely conclude that she has escaped being branded on the left arm by that planet.

But, as we have already seen, she is stamped with the print of Venus’s seal. If one may credit Le Sievre de Pervchio, “Venus, when she is discovered in the ascendent, imprints upon the native’s left arm a red mark, a sort of scar decorated with a tint of vermillion.”<sup>27</sup> Or according to M. Belot, whose opinion differs slightly from that of Pervchio, “When Venus is the dominant star in a nativity, her marks are found upon the loins, testicles, thighs, or perhaps upon the neck because Taurus, the first house of Venus, rules in that part; the form of these marks may be either bulbus or flat and the color either violet or whitish. They signify nothing but a lascivious nature.”<sup>28</sup> On the whole I am inclined to think that M. Belot is the more trustworthy



authority and to accept his location of the mark of Venus, especially so since all astrologers and physiognomists agree in attributing the secret parts of the body to that planet. Nor is that all. The good Wife has Mars's mark somewhere in her face and — because, as we have seen in the discussion of the Miller's wart, every mark or mole on the face is certainly reduplicated in a corresponding part of the body — also in another "privee place." M. Belot says: "If Mars is powerful in a nativity, his marks are found on the right side and most commonly in the front parts of the head [i.e., in the face or somewhere about the forehead, though one cannot be sure as to the exact position], or [he might have said, "and also "] on the 'little stomach' near the secret parts. These marks are red or purple, most often as large as small roses or drops of wine, moles colored like strawberries or cherries." <sup>29</sup>

It should be quite apparent by this time that Chaucer, the artist, considered it necessary only to make suggestions, in connection with the constellation in question, concerning certain planetary marks, being confident that his educated and cultured — from the mediaeval point of view — hearers or readers would instantly understand their exact nature, color, shape, size, location, and significance.

### III

With the above astrological principles and interpretations in mind, one is practically forced to the conclusion that Chaucer's Wife of Bath is in some measure the living embodiment, both in form and in character, of mingled but still conflicting astral influences.

That she herself is aware — and makes capital — of this conflict started within her nature at birth is suggested by her somewhat pitiful lamentation:

For certes, I am al Venerien  
In felling, and myn herte is Marcien.  
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,  
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardinesse . . .  
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun  
By vertu of my constellacioun.

Instead of having the naturally beautiful and well-proportioned figure — stately and tall, plump but never stout, graceful, with white skin touched delicately to pink — which might have been hers under the free, beneficent influence of Venus, she is endowed by the Mars-Venus combination with a stockily built, more or less ungraceful, buxom form of medium height. That strength which should have accompanied grace and beauty of body has been distorted into a powerful fecund energy; her large hips indicate excessive virility.<sup>30</sup> In place of the attractive face — round but not too large, with finely chiseled features, resplendent black eyes and delicately arched eyebrows, and with a lovely peach-bloom complexion set off by thick, curling hair of a dark shade — which Venus might have given, she has inflicted upon her by the malignancy of Mars a slightly heavy face inclined to fatness, characterised by perhaps coarsened features and certainly by a suspiciously red or florid complexion, which indicates that the woman is immodest, loquacious, and given to drunkenness. Let no such woman be trusted, say the physiognomists.<sup>31</sup> Her

voice, which should have been sweet, low, and well-modulated, is harsh, strident, and raised continually, as one might expect, in vulgar jest and indelicate banter. Such a voice is especially significant in its betrayal of the Wife's voluptuous and luxurious nature; one has suspected for a long time that she knows only too well how to "laughe and carpe" in fellowship with the most dissolute rakes among the pilgrims. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that her physical characteristics and her disposition correspond in a remarkable way with the "Signa mulieris calidae & quae libenter coit," which are these: "She reaches maturity at the age of twelve years; has small breasts becomingly full and hard, and coarse hair. She is bold in speech, having a keen, high-pitched voice, proud in mind, red of face, erect in carriage, given to drink; she loves to sing, wanders much, and delights in adorning herself as much as possible."<sup>32</sup> And the Love-star might have given her small, sharp teeth, white as alabaster and evenly set in gums like coral; Mars is perhaps responsible for the long, spike-like teeth, set far apart with gaps between, which she possesses. Unfortunately the good Wife is "gat-tothed," which interpreted as meaning "gap-toothed" may signify that she is "envious, irreverent, luxurious by nature, bold, deceitful, faithless, and suspicious."<sup>33</sup>

Not less remarkable than this more or less distortion of the Wife of Bath's body is the warping of her character which results from the Venus-Mars conjunction in Taurus. One may still find everywhere traces of the Venerean disposition — never essentially evil or vulgar, but *inclining* sometimes to be so — intensified or turned

awry or metamorphosed by Martian influence into something resembling a caricature — or even into what is quite the contrary — of that which she might have been. The children of Venus, as we have already seen, are naturally of a happy, joyous disposition, amiable and therefore charming and universally attractive, delighting in the dance and in all forms of innocent amusement, but withal characterised by a gentleness, a refinement, and by a calm dignity which results in a well-developed hatred of brawls and strife of any description. They are religious by nature, just in their dealings with men, leaders of noble lives, and — this is most important — of an artistic nature which expresses itself in an appreciation of song and instrumental music, in a love for delicate and pleasant odors, and which revels in the colors of elegant wearing apparel and in precious jewels. Being tender-hearted, bountiful, and benevolent, they are particularly happy in their social intercourse with people of culture and with those who have a taste for the artistic. Endowed with the warmest and most affectionate hearts, they are lightly prone to violent *amours* with the opposite sex, though it must be observed that their amatory relations need not of necessity lead to vice; they may be pleasure-loving and even voluptuous by inclination without being touched by wantonness, passionate without being sensual or lustful, and full of a consuming and perhaps entirely human desire without a trace of licentiousness. Their nature demands that variety of scene and the spice of exotic life which comes only through travel in foreign countries and through the association with people of unlike customs and manners. The children of Venus are your true aristocrats.

Such a woman the cloth-maker of Bath might have been. But how different! The natural cheerfulness of her disposition resolves itself into a sort of crude and clamorous hilarity, an overflow of superabundant animal and intellectual spirits, which makes of her a *bonne vivante* and a fitting companion for such tavern revelers as the Pardoner and her fourth husband. Her religious instinct has been debased to the extent that she goes to vigils and to preaching for the sole purpose, apparently, of showing her finery and arousing the envy of less fortunate women as she parades to the offering before everybody else; she attends miracle plays and follows the routes taken by devout pilgrims to the shrines of saints in order that she may satisfy an idle curiosity or find another lusty husband, no doubt; her readings — or the passages she most easily remembers having heard read — from the Bible or from St. Jerome are significant texts dealing with marriage and other complex sex-relations. The artistic temperament which should have been hers has been cheapened by the influence of the Warstar, so that she flashily decks herself out in gaudy colors — in scarlet dresses and hose, to say nothing of brand new shoes and silver spurs — and adorns herself on Sundays with coverchiefs weighing ten pounds and on the pilgrimage with a hat as large as a buckler. Even this strikingly overdressed woman shows a certain feeling, all the more pitiful because it is uncultivated or perverted, for the beautiful in dress; she is at least delightfully neat and trim for a middle-class woman of her time. But worst of all, Mars has played havoc with the luxurious impulses — the “likerousnesse” — which come from her mistress, Venus; she has always had a

"coltes tooth." Whatever else she may be, in the Prologue to her tale she appears as an unusually healthy and frank female animal, human and sexually attractive, whose dominating idea seems to be the glorification of fleshly delights and the gratification of physical desire. Mars has given her a "sturdy hardinesse" and a body so full of "ragerye" that even at the age of forty she is still "faire and yong and wel bigoon." She has married five husbands at the church door — besides other "companye in youthe," which may mean almost anything —, has enjoyed them with varying degrees of animal pleasure, and has laid them to rest after their marital labors were ended. Welcome the sixth; eight would be all too few. With the most brazen and shameless lack of modesty she reveals her exciting experiences abed, omitting neither the feigned appetite which secures for her whatever funds she needs for the decking of her person, nor the passionate love-making — an excellent example of misdirected tenderness — with which she wins the services of her three old husbands. She is not so much a restless wanderer as a gadder about in search of excitement — until her fifth husband puts a stop to her going and her gossiping for a season. And it is Mars who impels her to gain at all costs the dominating power over her husbands and who makes of her a scold, a wrangler, and a striker of blows — worthy of being beaten herself — until she attains her purpose. Truly, whatever one may say of Venus's influence it is turned into a baser order when Mars is discovered in conjunction. So the Wife of Bath appears in the Prologue to her tale: a fair Venerean figure and character



imposed upon and oppressed, distorted in some measure and warped, by the power of Mars.

No one must suppose, however, that this worthy woman is entirely depraved or that she is unattractive; after the worst has been said, she still has Venus for her mistress. Everybody knows that, even in the Prologue to her tale, she is pursued by the melancholy conviction that the type of life she has led is not the best possible; her laughing and carping, and perhaps her coarseness, are assumed in part as a mask to hide the bitterness which has been forced upon her by an unholy constellation. She knows better, at least, and still has the grace to cry,

Allas! allas! that ever love was sinne.

Consequently, there need be no occasion for surprise when we come to her tale to find that her creator, not only a genius but among the most sympathetic of men, should lift the veil for a moment from the secret places of her nature and should have permitted her to tell a story of the most delicate beauty and grace. It is an artistically woven tale of faery,<sup>34</sup> centering, to be sure, about the Wife's original contention that women should have dominion over their husbands but nonetheless imaginative and free from the slightest touch of vulgarity, and containing a long and nobly expressed sermon on what constitutes true "gentillesse" of heart and life. So excellent a critic as Ten Brink, not understanding the artistic side of her character and finding something dramatically inappropriate in such sentiments from the lips of a clothweaver, is moved to say: "The thoroughly sound moral of the long sermon given by the wise old woman,

before her metamorphosis, to her young, unwilling husband, comes more from the heart of the poet than from the *Wife of Bath*.”<sup>35</sup> But it does not seem so to me; both the story and the sermon may be considered as highly characteristic of the unfortunate teller.

Professor Root gives, with a remarkably keen and sympathetic insight into the complexities of the character under discussion, a more or less correct description of — though not the “key” to — the whole contradictory situation. “I conceive of the *Wife of Bath*,” says he, “as endowed originally with strong passions and vivid imagination, with what we are wont to call the poetic temperament. Had she been born in a palace, she might have become your typical heroine of romance, her inevitable lapses from virtue gilded over with the romantic adornments of moonlight serenades and secret trysts. But born an heiress to a weaver’s bench, there was no chance for her poetic imaginativeness to develop. Laughed at by others for her fine-spun fancies, she would certainly grow ashamed of them herself. I can believe that her excessive coarseness of speech was originally an affectation assumed to conceal the natural fineness of her nature, an affectation which easily became a second nature to her. Her strong passions demanded expression; and denied a more poetic gratification, and quite unrestrained by moral character, they express themselves in coarse vulgarity. It is only when called upon to tell a story, to leave the practical every-day world, in which she is forced to live, for the other world of fantasy, that the original imaginativeness of her nature finds opportunity to reveal itself.”<sup>36</sup> Precisely!

The key to her character, however, lies in the fact, as I have already indicated, that the fineness and delicacy which achieves expression in the story is but the resurging, as it were, of the artistic Venerean impulse, an outcropping of the poetic temperament which somehow has been kept, subconsciously no doubt, pure and untainted from the blasting and warping influence of Mars and circumstance. Or perhaps she has guarded faithfully as a kind of sacred possession this love of the beautiful, which no one about her could understand; it may be that in moments of world-weariness she sought the fairy realm of the imagination given to her by her mistress, and found refuge for a time from the coarseness inflicted upon her by the War-star. The unsatisfied yearning for that gentility and nobility of character which might and should have been hers, but for the power of an evil planet, is pathetic; the struggle which has kept unmarred a bit of her original nature in the midst of sordid conditions of life and in the face of adverse circumstances is heroic. The poet may, after all, have considered her his most tragic figure because — as is certainly the case — she is the most nearly completely human.

How does such a character grow? Any dogmatizing by a layman upon the workings of an artist's mind in the act of creation is hazardous in the extreme, but speculation is always fascinating and perhaps harmless. It may be conceived by some that Chaucer is here drawing, to the best of his ability, the portrait of an actual middle-class person of his time, whom he has known on intimate terms of association.<sup>37</sup> In that case he has no

doubt noted carefully and recorded faithfully the significant speech and actions, the mannerisms and emotional reactions of the woman under observation, and has interpreted these external indications of inward personality in terms of character. The idea is intriguing; but since it is manifestly impossible for even the most cunning artist to penetrate the mystery of another person's individuality, to sound its depths and shallows, and to discover the mixed sources of action and feeling in any given instance, such a process of imaginative interpretation from the outside must inevitably remain largely descriptive, resulting in a character-sketch and not a character-creation. The Wife of Bath is a character-creation. Or again, most critics hold that the original "model" for Chaucer's "portrait" of the cloth-weaver may be found in the figure of an old harridan, La Vielle, taken from the *Roman de la Rose*. Professor W. E. Mead is of the opinion that, though the poet "did not attempt to copy the portrait of La Vielle as a whole, he took from her the general suggestions for the outlines of the Wife of Bath. But he modified the figure of La Vielle by making her younger and more vigorous, by giving her as keen an interest in life as she had ever had, by representing her as still ready for matrimony whenever opportunity should offer. Furthermore, Chaucer transformed the somewhat morose and broken-spirited old woman, entirely out of sympathy with life, into a witty and frisky shrew — good-natured in a way, but still a shrew. Where did Chaucer pick up the hint for that?" Quite likely, concludes Professor Mead, he borrows again from the French poem some characteris-

tics of a jealous husband, Le Jaloux, whose scolding is somewhat similar to that indulged in by the Wife of Bath.<sup>38</sup> But granting that Chaucer has borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose* and from other literary sources certain ideas, or outlines, or human qualities, or personal characteristics, as it were, literary scraps and fragments, we are still but little nearer the solution of the problem. A figure consisting merely of a composite of many elements, a mosaic of human qualities and characteristics, is — to use the terms of scholastic philosophy — a monstrosity of “accidents” without “substance.” The Wife of Bath is essentially “substance.”

And finally, the present writer — influenced by the material presented in this chapter — once entertained the perilous theory that Chaucer may have fashioned Dame Alisoun in accordance with astrological principles. Being continually exercised over the problem of foreordination — I have said elsewhere<sup>39</sup> — and apparently believing to some extent in the influence of the stars upon the affairs of men, he has, in the case of the Wife of Bath, assumed the prerogatives and the responsibilities of a creator, setting up carefully a horoscope, producing a human being to be ruled by it, and amusing himself — perhaps like some other Creator — with the inevitable actions and emotions of his living creature. But upon more mature consideration I have concluded that such a theory in application is so mechanical and so simple in its execution that the resultant figure is likely to be little better than a highly colored dummy galvanized into a semblance of activity and emotion by astral influences, and in no sense a complex human being. Under the

spell of Chaucer's pen one rests under the illusion that the Wife of Bath is a complex human being. Endowed with passion, reason, memory, and imagination, she is discovered undergoing a succession of human experiences which compass many joys and ills this flesh is heir to, growing old with the passing of time like the rest of us, recalling her youth with a gusto not unmixed with regret and sadness, sending her imagination abroad and forward with that pathetic wistfulness characteristic of those whose pleasures are chiefly material but whose spiritual powers are sufficiently developed to afford glimpses of something better. I do not know how Chaucer has created such a character, but I suspect that the soul and personality of this woman was conceived in the poet's imagination as a complete whole; at least, he alone could understand fully the sources of her contradictory thinking, feeling, and action. And in order to body her forth he has evidently drawn upon a rich store of human materials gleaned here and there from observation, from the imaginative interpretation of the common experiences of life, and from the literary works of other men, assimilating these raw materials by the power of a creative imagination into the personality of the Wife of Bath. In this process of creation the astrological material has played only a relatively small part. But a full interpretation of the horoscope and a consideration of astral influences moving upon the character in question would seem to be necessary for a thorough understanding of the part's original conception.



## CHAPTER SIX

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

CHAUCER'S *Knight's Tale* is a marked example of the author's genius for welding into a symmetrical and unified whole the literary and other materials, often within themselves incongruous, that may have come into his hands. While the story is based primarily upon the *Teseide* of Boccaccio with amplifying passages from the *Thebaid* of Statius, it may more properly be called an original paraphrase than a translation; the result is a distinct creation much more artistic and effective than either of the prime sources. As critics have shown, the poet has added to the general outline of the narrative certain extraneous elements gleaned here and there from mythography, legend, history, and medicine; he has made use of realistic touches, revealing the customs and manners of his own day; and so subtle is the contraction, amplification, and fusion that one scarcely realises how epic material has been transformed into a romance of the highest order.<sup>1</sup> In recasting the story for his mediaeval audience the artist has apparently found it necessary or perhaps expedient to discard much of the ancient mythological machinery, which would encumber his narrative to no purpose, and to substitute as a motivating force that formative and impelling influence of stars in which his age believed. It is the general aim of this chapter, therefore, to interpret the technical significance of the

astrological references, and their implications, with which the poem abounds and to show that Chaucer, in order to furnish such a motivating force for the final stages of the action, has skilfully gone about transferring the power of the ancient gods of his sources to the astrological planets of the same name; that the real conflict behind the surface action of the story is a conflict between the planets, Saturn and Mars; that the kings Lycurgus and Emetreus are, respectively, Saturnalian and Martian figures introduced to champion the causes of the heroes; and that the illness of Arcite is a malady inflicted upon him by his planetary enemy, Saturn.

Already near the beginning of the story Chaucer has indicated that there may be a planetary influence working back of the misfortunes of the heroes. Palamon has just been stung to the heart by the sight of "fresshe Emelye" walking in the garden outside of the prison walls, and has cried out in pain; whereupon his fellow prisoner, Arcite, not yet understanding the source of the trouble, counsels patience in adversity and philosophises:

Some wikke aspect or disposicioun  
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun,  
Hath yeven us this, al-though we hadde it sworn;  
So stood the heven whan that we were born;  
We moste endure it; this is the short and pleyn.  
(*C. T.*, A, 1087).

Though Arcite's knowledge of astrology is apparently hazy and indefinite enough, still his analysis of his own situation is more true than he can be aware of; as we shall see later he does indeed lose his life through the malignancy of this same wicked Saturn. At any rate,

his reference to the stars fortifies the reader's mind against surprise when later Chaucer, in describing the temple of Mars — for the most part the god — says:

Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,  
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;  
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,  
Yet was hir deeth depeynted ther-biforn,  
By manasinge of Mars, right by figure;  
So was it shewed in that portreiture  
As is depeynted in the sterres above,  
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.  
(*C. T.*, A, 2031 ff.).

By the beginning of Part Three, then, there is felt behind the action of the story a mysterious, impelling power, the force of the planets in the affairs of men; perhaps the fortunes of Palamon and Arcite were written at birth among the stars.

All through Part Three may be seen Chaucer's process of substituting the influence of planets for the power of the gods. Tatlock says of the poet's manner in the *Franklin's Tale*: "Since Chaucer has set the poem in pagan times, he might have ascribed the marvel to the power of a divinity; but characteristically of his later manner he chose a means which brought the poem closer to real life, the astrological magic which the Middle Ages universally credited."<sup>2</sup> So it is in the *Knight's Tale*. During the fifty weeks which must pass before the coming of Palamon and Arcite for their final battle, Theseus busies himself with preparing the royal lists, over the gates of which he builds temples to the

gods. The altar of Venus stands above the east gate, that of Mars over the west entrance, and northward in a tower above the wall is the oratory of Diane. The description of Mars's temple is translated out of Boccaccio and Statius down to line 2016; this represents Mars the god. But the succeeding lines, introduced independently by Chaucer, describe the power of Mars the planet:

Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres;  
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres;  
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;  
The cook y-scalded, for al his longe ladel,  
Noght was foryeten by th' infortune of Marte;  
The carter over-riden with his carte,<sup>3</sup>  
Under the wheel ful lowe adoun.  
Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,  
The barbour, and the bocher, and the smith  
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his stith.  
And al above, depeynted in a tour,  
Saw I conquest sittinge in greet honour,  
With the sharpe swerde over his heed  
Hanginge by a sotil twynes threed.

(*C. T.*, A, 2016 ff.).

"Tyrwhitt thinks," says Wright, "that Chaucer might intend to be satirical in these lines; but the introduction of such apparently undignified incidents arose from the confusion already mentioned of the god of war and the planet to which his name was given, and the influence of which was supposed to produce all the disasters here mentioned."<sup>4</sup> But here is no confusion, it seems to me; Chaucer is deliberately building up an as-

trological influence with which he is going to supplant that of the divinities.

And in this instance his astrology is entirely correct; in the Middle Ages Mars was supposed to produce just such catastrophes. Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel, who represents possibly the best in mediæval astrology, says of the nature and influence of the war-star: "Mars is a planet by nature hot and dry, fiery, nocturnal, feminine, and violent; he is a destroyer and a conqueror, delighting in slaughter and death, in quarrels, brawls, disputes, contests, and other contraventions; he is stupid, quickly moved to vehement and devastating anger, abandoning himself completely to the execution of whatever he plans and never withdrawing his hand from accomplishing that which he begins. He is instrumental in stirring up seditions; he inspires wars and battles and rules over the ravaging and laying waste of lands, over pillage, plundering, ruin, and destruction by land and sea. He rejoices in the outpouring of blood, in the afflictions of the miserable, and in all kinds of oppression." <sup>5</sup>

One may doubtless ascribe to Chaucer's creative imagination, however, the particular illustrations which he produces of Mars's baleful influence, such as the burning of ships, the strangled hunter, the scalded cook, and the child devoured by a sow. The poet is correct, moreover, in his enumeration of the classes of men in the professions to which Mars is supposed to be patron. William Lilly gives an extended list as follows: "Generals of Armies, Colonels, Captains, or any Souldiers having Command of Armies, all manner of Souldiers, Physicians, Apothecaries, Chirurgions, Alchimists, Gunners,

*Butchers, Marshals, Sergeants, Bailiffs, Hang-men, Theeves, Smiths, Bakers, Armourers, Watch-makers, Tailors, Cutlers of Swords and Knives, Barbers, Dyers, Cookes, Carpenters, Gamesters, Tanners, Carriers.*"<sup>6</sup> Chaucer selects as representatives of "Martes divisioun," however, only the barber, the butcher, and the smith who forges swords, though he mentions also the cook and the carter. In addition, the statue of Mars is described as having two figures of stars shining above it,

That oon Puella, that other Rubeus,  
(*C. T.*, A, 2045),

which are, as Skeat has shown, two "figures" in geomantic astrology ascribed, as the poet thinks, to the planet Mars.<sup>7</sup> Both the temple and the statue of Mars, it seems, indicate that Chaucer intends to combine the form of the god with the power of the star.

Though there is little in the descriptions of the temples and persons of Venus and Diane to indicate that they are anything other than pagan goddesses, still it must be observed that prayers are made to them by Palamon and Emily in their respective "hours," i.e., in their unequal astrological hours. Tyrwhitt has already sufficiently explained the meaning of "unequal astrological hours." He notes that each hour of the day is attributed to some one of the planets, and successively in the following order: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, and Luna. "In the astrological system," says he, "the day, from sunrise to sunset, and the night, from sunset to sunrise, being each divided into twelve hours, it is plain that the hours of the day



and night were never equal except just at the equinoxes. The hours attributed to the planets were of this unequal sort.”<sup>8</sup> On Sunday morning, says Chaucer apparently after the most careful astrological calculation, when Palamon hears the lark sing, although it is not yet day by two hours, he prepares to make a pilgrimage to the temple of Venus “in hir houre” (2217); at the “thridde houre inequal” (2271) the sun rises, and Emily goes to pray in the temple of Diane; and “the nexte houre of Mars folwinge this” (2367) Arcite goes to do sacrifice to Mars. “To apply this doctrine (of astrological hours) to the present case,” says Tyrwhitt, “the first hour of the Sunday, reckoning from sunrise, belonged to the Sun, the planet of the day; the second to Venus, the third to Mercury, etc.; and continuing the method of allotment, we shall find that the twenty-second hour also belonged to the Sun, and the twenty-third to Venus; so that the hour of Venus was, as Chaucer says, two hours before sunrise of the following day. Accordingly we are told that the third hour after Palamon set out for the temple of Venus, the Sun rose, and Emily began to go to the temple of Diane. It is not said that this was the hour of Diane, or the Moon, but it really was; for, as we have seen, the twenty-third hour of Sunday belonging to Venus, the twenty-fourth must be given to Mercury, and the first hour of Monday fell in course to the Moon, the presiding planet of that day. After this, Arcite is described as walking to the temple of Mars, 1.2357, in *the nexte houre of Mars*, that is, the fourth hour of the day. It is necessary to take these words together, for the *nexte houre* would

signify the *second* hour of the day; but that, according to the rule of rotation mentioned above, belonged to Saturn, as the third did to Jupiter. The *fourth* was the *nexte houre of Mars* after the last hour named.”<sup>9</sup> From this analysis it appears that Chaucer has not *confused* the gods and the planets but that he is with painstaking accuracy calling attention to the fact that, in the action of the story, they will function as planets alone. It is significant that in securing this planetary rotation he has changed the order of the petitioners from that observed in the *Teseide*: in the *Knight's Tale* it is Palamon to Venus, Emily to Diane, Arcite to Mars; in the *Teseide* it is Arcite to Mars (vii, 23-28), Palamon to Venus (vii, 43-49), Emily to Diane (vii, 71-92).

Prayers and sacrifices having been finished, Venus (though she knows little of wars and battles) seems to promise success to Palamon in the coming contest; Mars already adjudges victory to Arcite; and Diane assures Emily that she shall wed one of the lovers who now suffer so much woe on her account. Here is a conflict of promises on the part of the “gods”; surely both Palamon and Arcite cannot be victorious.

And right anon swich stryf ther is bigonne  
 For thilke graunting, in the hevene above,  
 Betwixe Venus, the goddesse of love,  
 And Mars, the sterne god armipotente,  
 That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;  
 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde  
 That knew so manye of adventures olde,  
 Fond in his olde experience an art,  
 That he ful sone hath plesed every part.

(C. T., 2438 ff.).

The suggestion for this strife in the heavens Chaucer gets from the *Teseide* (vii, 67); but, the gods having been transformed into planets as we have seen, the conflict has now become one of planetary influences. Jupiter, the greatest of all the fortunate planets, is introduced as peacemaker; and Saturn, the most powerful of the infortunes, arises to resolve the difficulties apparently, but in reality, according to his nature, to furnish through malignant advice the final disaster. Chaucer is again wise in his selection of Jupiter as the bringer of peace. For, says Haly, "Jupiter abhors Saturn and his nature, prohibits and restrains him in all his works. The former teaches and fosters goodness, shrinks from evil, assists the poor, and governs whatever is commodious or agreeable. He is truthful in speech, honest in deed, and fortunate in all his activities and influences, loving councils of wise men, just ordinances, and discriminating judgments."<sup>10</sup> And Alchabitus is still more complimentary and pertinent: "In his magisterial capacity Jupiter possesses adequate knowledge pertaining to law, delivers just decisions, and judges with integrity. When he beholds men engaged in altercations and litigations, he has the happy faculty of restoring peace and establishing concord among them."<sup>11</sup>

Saturn, as Chaucer presents him, is entirely the planet except that his being represented as the father of Venus suggests a myth connected with his godship. He is the "olde," wise, "pale Saturnus the colde," who stops the strife for the time being "al be that it is agayn his kynde" (2451). Finding that his daughter Venus, who is more powerful in matters pertaining to love and

peace than in war, cannot properly support her warrior Palamon, he ranges himself upon her side and prepares to fight her battles against Mars, the war-star. The conflict, therefore, until the final catastrophe rages between Mars, the lesser infortune and supporter of Arcite, and Saturn, the greater infortune and protector of Palamon. And Saturn is well equipped for such a conflict; for, says he,

My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,  
 Hath more power than wot any man.  
 Myn is the drenching in the see so wan;  
 Myn is the prison in the derke cote;  
 Myn is the strangling and hanging by the throte;  
 The murmure, and the cherles rebelling,  
 The groyning, and the pryvee empoysoning;  
 I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun  
 Why! I dwelle in the signe of the Leoun.  
 Myn is the ruine of hye halles,  
 The falling of the toures and of the walles  
 Upon the mynour or the carpenter.  
 I slow Sampsoun in shaking the piler;  
 And myne be the maladyes colde,  
 The derke tresons, and the castes olde;  
 My loking is the fader of pestilence.  
(C. T., A, 2444 ff.)

Confident in his strength he comforts Venus with the assurance that her own knight Palamon shall have his lady Emily, Mars to the contrary.

Saturn's boast of an overwhelming power for evil is well authenticated by the best mediaeval astrologers. We are informed in the *Compost of Ptolemaeus* that "Sat-

urne is the highest Planet of all the seven; he is mighty of himself, and governeth all the great cold and waters; he compasseth all the other Planets, for he is under the first mobile. Saturne is so hye that Astronomers cannot well measure it; he is thirty years in running his course.”<sup>12</sup> As to his general nature Alchabitius is lengthy and explicit: “Saturn is masculine, evil, diurnal, signifying extreme old age if he be in the West and the beginning of old age if he be in the East. He controls a certain heaviness of cold and dry, and from a combination of these qualities under his influence is produced and fostered the wise man of melancholic complexion. He signifies darkness of counsel, profound silence, and ancient and precious things pertaining to judgments. He is deserving of mistrust and suspicion, moving men to complaints and mutterings. He is old, changeable, and of evil taste; he has power over dirty waters, long wanderings, prisons, chains, slowness of labors, afflictions, and *almauerith*, that is, the substance of dead men.”<sup>13</sup> He is malicious enough in any position, but he is most powerful in the fixed signs, especially, as Chaucer has him inform Venus, in the sign of the Lion. Says Guido Bonatus: “If Saturn be in the fixed signs, he is powerful in producing destitution and death for those born upon the earth. But in Leo he is stronger, hardier, and more persistent than in the other signs.”<sup>14</sup> Albumasar further remarks: “And if his position be equidistant in Leo, it signifies that infirmities and death will come upon women, that wars and misfortunes of all kinds will transpire, and that bandits will be active. If he be meridional, you may expect the rise of rivers

and floods of great waters; if he be retrograde, corruption of the air, mortality, and the vehemence of hot, destructive winds; if under the Rays of the Sun, conflicts, wars, fevers and other diseases bringing death to men, the working of poison, and the bite of serpents.”<sup>15</sup> His indeed are the “maladyes colde,” and his looking is the “fader of pestilence.” When in Leo, says William Lilly, he is responsible for “all impediments of the right ear, teeth, all quartan agues proceeding of cold, dry, and melancholy distempers, leprosies, rheums, consumptions, black jaundies, palsies, tremblings, vain fears, fantasies, dropsie, the hand and footgout, apoplexies, dog-hunger, too much flux of the heme-roids, and ruptures.”<sup>16</sup> And as we shall see anon, he visits one of his most malignant distempers upon the wounded Arcite. This, then, is the cold, dry, slow-moving Saturn, sending death by inundation and violent storms of pestilential winds, fomenting insurrections, dealing destruction by poison, in prison, and by means of disease, who is pitted against his natural competitor in evil, Mars. The lines are clearly drawn; the battle between Palamon and Arcite — and back of that the struggle between the planets for mastery — is, by the end of Part Three, imminent.

Chaucer has seen fit to provide his heroes with one champion each of transcendent prowess; with Palamon comes Lycurgus, King of Thrace, and with Arcite appears Emetreus, King of India. Twenty-seven lines of description (2128–2154) are devoted to the personal appearance and regalia of Lycurgus, while he has only four lines in the *Teseide* (vi, 14);<sup>17</sup> and it requires twenty-four lines to present properly the King of India.



For some time it has seemed to me an artistic impropriety on Chaucer's part to introduce these figures into the story with such pomp and to call especially attention to them with such description of their splendid appearance, only to drop them from the action of the narrative forthwith, except to remark later (2637-2646) that Emetreus strikes Palamon a powerful blow and that in the rescue of Palamon, who has been taken to the stake by the force of twenty, Lycurgus is borne down and Emetreus is unhorsed. But as usual Chaucer works with a sure hand. These two champions are, it may be supposed, personal representatives in the lists of the astrological forces working back of the story and centered, as we have seen, in Saturn and Mars. Emetreus, who comes to support Arcite the protégé of Mars, is a typical Martian figure; and Lycurgus, who aids Palamon, now under the protection of Saturn, is Saturnalian in form.

This Emetreus, who does not appear in either the *Thebaid* or the *Teseide* and who is almost entirely a creation of Chaucer's own,<sup>18</sup> not only comes riding "lyk the god of armes, Mars," but is in body a product of Martian influence.

His criske heer lyk ringes was y-ronne  
And that was yelow, and glitered as the sonne.  
His nose was heigh, his eyen bright citryn,  
His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn,  
A fewe fraknes in his face y-spreynd,  
Betwixen yelow and somdel blak y-meynd,  
And as a leoun he his loking caste . . .  
His voys was as a trompe thunderinge.

(*C. T.*, A, 2169 ff.).

Of the Martial man, whose complexion is hot and dry, Claudius Ptolemaeus remarks: "When Mars is oriental, the man born under his influence will be of medium size, neither too fat nor too lean; his complexion will be of a pleasing red and white color; his eyes mottled or speckled (*varii*); his hair thick and of medium texture. If, however, Mars be occidental, the native will be of a red color."<sup>19</sup> Alchabitius is of the opinion that such a man will have a "round, red face and red hair, and saffron-colored eyes (*croceos*); he will be bold, of a fearful and violent aspect, lightly scoffing at men."<sup>20</sup> But it is Albohazen Haly who gives the best account: "If Mars be oriental, the man born under his influence will have a red and white body of medium proportions, a large head with thick hair inclining to curl and of a reddish color, a round face with a few freckles or marks upon it, large nostrils, and a sharp and wrathful aspect."<sup>21</sup> Baptista Porta quotes from Firmicus Maternus to the effect that the Martial man will have "red hair and eyes with blood-spots in them"; from Abdila, that "he will have a fat, round face of a red color mixed with black, not quite a pure red but rather a red darkened as if by sun-burn"; and from others, that he "will have a strong, firm voice and thick, curly hair."<sup>22</sup> Lilly is not quite convinced in his own mind, apparently, as to the color of the eyes: he says in one place, "Generally Martialists have this forme, namely, they are but of middle stature, their bodies strong, and their bones big, rather lean than fat; their complexion is of a brown ruddy colour, or of a high colour, their visage round, their haire red or sandy flaxen, and many times crisping

or curling; sharp hazel eyes, and they piercing, a bold confident countenance, and the man active and fearless";<sup>23</sup> but elsewhere he remarks, "A Martial man is many times full faced with a lively high colour like sunne-burnt, or like raw tanned leather, a fierce countenance, his eyes being sparkling or sharp and darting, and of a yellow colour; his haire both of head and beard being reddish (but herein you must vary according to the Sign); in fiery signs and aery where Mars fals to be with fixed stars of his owne nature, there he shewes a deepe sandy red colour, but in watery signs he is of a flaxenish or whitish bright hayre; if in earthly signs, the haire is like a sad browne, or of a sad chestnut colour."<sup>24</sup> From what Mr. Richard Saunders has to say about Mars's influence in sanguine complexions I would judge Emetreus's temperament to be of that sort: "If Mars be in a sanguine nativity, which happens very seldom, the person will be very well featured, round-faced, flaxen-haired, green-eyed . . . the speech bold, proud, and menacing."<sup>25</sup> The Martial man's hair, then, varies in shades of color according to circumstances from dark brown to chestnut, reddish, red, yellow, sandy, or whitish flaxen, and it is crisp or curling; or as Chaucer says, "His crisp hair, curling in rings, was yellow and glittered as the sun." His complexion is a fine mixture of white and deep red, usually tanned as if by exposure to the sun; Chaucer merely states, "his color was sangwyn." His face is full and round, which Chaucer suggests, possibly, when he speaks of the "lippes rounde" — the usual full lips of the heavy man with a round face. His sanguine complexion is dark-

ened, however, not only as if by a healthy tan but by the appearance of a few freckles — “forte in ea maculas”; or as Chaucer says, “He had a few freckles sprinkled in his face, in color somewhat between yellow and black.” His eyes vary in color from *varius* to *croceus*, hazel, yellow, or light green; Chaucer selects the bright citron. His voice is firm and strong, or as Chaucer has it, “as a trompe thunderinge”; his countenance is fierce, proud, bold, menacing, with sparkling piercing eyes, or as Chaucer says, “as a leoun he his looking caste.” Such is the man born under the influence of Mars; and such, it would seem, is Emetreus, King of India, champion of Arcite the protégé of the war-star.

Lycurgus, King of Thrace, is in physical appearance striking and magnificent:

Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,  
 The cercles of his eyen in his heed  
 They gloweden betwixe yellow and reed;  
 And lyk a griffon looked he aboute,  
 With kempe heres on his browes stoute;  
 His limes grete, his braunes harde and stronge,  
 His shuldres brode, his armes rounde and longe . . .  
 His longe heer was kembed bihinde his bak,  
 As any ravenes fether it shoon for-blak.

(*C. T.*, A, 2130 ff.)

And this is the very form and fashion of the Saturnalian man. Claudius Ptolemaeus says: “When Saturn is oriental and the sole disposer of a man’s fortunes at birth, the native’s form will be of medium proportions, his color like that of a quince; the hair of his head and breast will be thick, black, and curling.”<sup>26</sup> Albohazen

Haly adds further: "He who is born under the influence of Saturn has large eyes, one of which may be manifestly smaller than the other, and in both of them there are spots; his hair curls, and his face is large."<sup>27</sup>

Porta quotes from Iulius Maternus to the effect that Saturnalian influence "makes a man of thin body and of a pallid, languid color"; from Messahala, that "he forms a man colored between black and yellow, with small eyes, thick lips, and a flat nose"; from Dorotheus, that such a man will be "extremely hairy on his body, having bushy, overhanging eyebrows joined together over the nose"; and from others, that "he will possess the black, bristly hair of melancholic men, have heavy eyebrows joined together, thick lips, constricted nostrils, and be moist and livid or bluish of complexion."<sup>28</sup> Of the corporature of a man of Saturn Lilly says: "Most part his body more dry and cold, of a middle stature; his complexion pale, swartish or muddy, his eyes little . . . black or sad haire, and it hard and rugged, great eares, hanging, lowering eyebrows, thick lips and nose . . . his shoulders broad and large . . . his belly somewhat short and lank";<sup>29</sup> and again, "Saturn signifieth one of a swart colour, palish like lead; thicke and very hairy on the body, not great eyes; many times his complexion is between black and yellow, or as if he has a species of black and yellow jaundies."<sup>30</sup> And Mr. Saunders concludes: "First, he that is cholerick havinge Saturne in his radix ruling, is pale, having his eyes deep in his head; slow-paced, red eyes, or like those of a cat, and little. Secondly, if Saturne be in the nativity of a flegmatick radix of any person of either sex, he is naturally fat, the

colour of his eyes and the eyes themselves like lead, and all about them there is as it were a bruisedness. . . . But Saturn participating of the sanguine humour, which is the royal one and best of the temperaments, the properties are these: They have the voyce sharp and strong, they are merry and jovial; but there are very few that have Saturn chronocrator, or are of a Sanguine humour; as for the face, they have it fair enough, but the colour like an olive, red eyes with bloody spots in them.”<sup>31</sup> He is also of the opinion that “when the hair hangs down and is soft, it denotes a humid complexion and sanguine.”<sup>32</sup>

These, then, are the characteristics of the man born under the influence of Saturn in various positions. His hair, on the head and elsewhere, is always a deep black, sometimes coarse, crisp or curling, but in the case of the royal sanguine nature softer and hanging down straighter; or as Chaucer says, “His beard was black, and his long hair, black as a raven’s feather, was combed behind his back.” His complexion is usually swartish or maybe honey-colored, a mixture of black and yellow as if from a touch of black and yellow jaundice, or in the case of the sanguine temperament the color of a ripe olive. His eyes are sometimes large, sometimes small, but always deep set in the head, in color red like those of a cat or, in sanguine natures, red with bloody spots in them. Observe that Chaucer does not say that the *eyes* are yellow and red, but that the “*circles* of his eyes in his head glowed between yellow and red.” This curious effect is doubtless produced when the “red eyes with bloody spots in them” of a sanguine Saturnalian



man are set deep in a dark yellowish complexion; the red eyes have yellowish circles about them. His eyebrows are exceedingly thick, rugged, joined over the nose, and hang lowering over the eyes; or as Chaucer remarks, after having described the circles of his eyes glowing between yellow and red,

And lyk a griffon loked he aboute,  
With kempe heres on his browes stoute.<sup>33</sup>

And his body, though of medium stature, is well formed with broad shoulders and slender waist; or as Chaucer expands it; "His limbs great, his muscles hard and strong, his shoulders broad, his arms long and round." Such is the man born under the influence of Saturn; and such, it seems, is Lycurgus, King of Thrace and champion of Palamon, whose cause has been espoused by the greater infortune, Saturn.

Monday having been spent in the offering of sacrifices, in jousting, and in the arraying of both astrological and knightly forces, Tuesday brings in the day of the great combat. All day the battle is waged, wavering from side to side with varying success, until just before the "sonne un-to the reste wente" (2637) the strong king Emetreus strikes Palamon such a terrific blow that he is taken by the force of twenty knights and drawn, still unyielding, to the stake. In the attempted rescue Lycurgus is borne down, and Emetreus, for all his strength, is hurled out of his saddle a sword's length. Theseus stops the combat and pronounces Arcite the victor (2658). Venus, seeing her knight thus overcome and being powerless to aid him, is so ashamed and pro-

voked that her tears fall into the lists. But Saturn has promised to support her. "Daughter," says he, "hold thy peace. Mars has his will; his knight has all that he asked for; and, by my head, thou shalt be comforted soon" (2663-2670). Accordingly, as Arcite parades himself as victor before the now friendly eye of Emily, an infernal Fury, sent by Pluto at the request of Saturn, starts from the ground and frightens the horse of Arcite so that the victorious knight is thrown and fatally injured (2679-2690). It must be observed that, whereas in the *Teseide* (ix, 4) this Fury is sent from Dis at the request of Venus herself, here the accident is brought about through the machinations of Saturn, who fights for the cause of Venus and Palamon. The fatal injury to Arcite, moreover, is delivered in the astrological "hour" of Saturn when he is most powerful. William Hand Browne reviews the astrological situation admirably: "The combat takes place on Tuesday, Mars' own day, and Arcite is victorious. Venus cries out with vexation; but Saturn bids her be quiet and watch what happens. Now there are three hours in Tuesday in which Saturn could act: the sixth, the thirteenth, and the twentieth. The sixth was too early; it came at noon, when the combat was not yet decided; the thirteenth began at sunset. So Chaucer carefully notes the time; just before sunset — 'er the sonne un-to the reste wente' — Palamon is overcome and bound, Theseus stops the combat and proclaims Arcite victor, who rides triumphantly around the lists. The sun has set, and Saturn's hour has come. He sends a flash of fire from the earth, frightening Arcite's horse, who throws his

rider, injuring him fatally.”<sup>84</sup> Mars and Arcite have indeed had their little moment of victory, but now Venus and Palamon under the protection of Saturn have already seen the beginning of what will presently be complete success for their cause.

But Arcite is not yet dead. Immediately after being pitched from his horse, his breast injured on the saddle-bow, he is tortured by a congestion of blood in the face, which becomes as black as charcoal or a crow (2690). They remove him to the palace and try every remedy known to physicians for his recovery, but nature no longer has any dominion over his body; and where nature will not work, farewell physic! go bear the man to church (2760).

Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the sore  
Encreeseth at his herte more and more.  
The clothered blood, for any lechecraft,  
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk y-laft,  
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusinge,  
Ne drinke of herbes may ben his helpinge.  
The vertu expulsif, or animal,  
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural  
Ne may the venim voyden, ne expelle.  
The pypes of his longes gonne to swelle,  
And every lacerte in his brest adoun  
Is shent with venim and corrupcioun.  
Him gayneth neither, for to gete his lyf,  
Vomyt upward, ne downward laxatif.

(*C. T.*, A, 2743 ff.)

Now before it can be shown that Saturn is responsible for complications which render Arcite's injury fatal —

as I hope to do anon — it is necessary to consider in some detail the nature of the so-called “virtues” and their functions in the human body.

Chaucer is technically correct, from the mediaeval point of view, when he says that in this case the virtue expulsive, or animal, cannot expel the poison from that virtue which is called natural. According to Constantinus Africanus the Reasonable Human Soul or, in its various manifestations, the *spiritus* gets its work done in the body through the mediate functioning of a general force called *virtus*. This *virtus* may be divided into three classes: *virtus naturalis*, whose seat of action is primarily in the liver; the *virtus spiritualis*, or *vitalis*, which functions chiefly in the heart; and the *virtus animata*, or *animalis*, working through the brain. The *virtus naturalis*, in turn, is further divided into (1) the *generatiua* (*ministrata*), which has two functions, (a) *mutabilis*, and (b) *formitiua*; and (2) the *nutritiua* and *pascitiua* (both *ministrans*), which together have four functions, (a) *appetitiua*, (b) *digestiua*, (c) *contentiua*, and (d) *expulsiua*. The *virtus spiritualis* is of two kinds: (1) *ministrans*, producing emotions such as anger, fear, or joy in the heart, and (2) *ministrata*, having to do with the contraction and expansion of the heart (*pulsus*). And the *virtus animalis* has two modes of expression: (1) *interior*, which includes reason, imagination, and (2) *exterior*, embracing (a) *sensus*, and (b) *motus localis*, or voluntary motion, both of which depend largely upon the action of the nerves.<sup>35</sup> From this scheme it appears that the “virtue expulsive” is one of the subdivisions of the *virtus naturalis*, and that, therefore,

Chaucer may be mistaken when he speaks of the "vertu expulsif, or animal" cleansing "thilke vertu cleped natural" from poison. But Chaucer is not mistaken; he is merely following the best medical authority of his time in that violent controversy which was waged over the location, in this scheme of the virtues, of that voluntary motion of the lungs, *anhelitus*, or that still more voluntary motion performed by the lungs and the surrounding muscles and nerves in the act of coughing.

Arnoldus de Villa Nova classifies *anhelitus* along with *pulsus* under *virtus vitalis*, because "in the contraction and expansion of the breast the other virtues are exercised"; but his commentator concludes, after considerable reasoning, that "although this is true, the movement involved in breathing is not *vitalis* but *animalis*." <sup>36</sup> Constantinus, indeed, finding that breathing is the most indispensable of the virtues, gives one whole chapter to it. "Anhelitus or breathing," says he in part, "is very necessary in order that the natural heat of the body may be tempered or regulated, the *spiritus uitalis* nourished, and the *spiritus animalis* generated. In the management of cold air it guards the natural heat, which is reduced to the proper temperature, and expels the smoky air thrown off by the blood. Thus from the frigidity of fresh air is the *spiritus uitalis* nourished and the *spiritus animalis* created." In other words, the action of the lungs in breathing draws in cold air which is sent to the heart to regulate the natural heat of it and from thence is distributed to all parts of the body as a purging and purifying influence. Thus *anhelitus* feeds continually and tempers the *virtus vitalis* out of which comes the

spirit which rules the *virtus animalis*. And therefore, nothing is more needful than breath to keep and save life. A man may live for some time without meat and drink; but if the breath is stopped or hindered in any way, the heart becomes surcharged with an unnatural heat so that the man straightway strangles. "Consequently," he concludes, "this contraction and expansion of the breast, which is called breathing, is voluntary; it brings into play the nerves and the muscles, and every conscious exercise of the nerves and muscles is a voluntary motion."<sup>37</sup> And therefore, he implies, *anhelitus* belongs to the activities of the *virtus animalis*.

But it is Gilbertus Anglicus who, in his conclusive arguments regarding the inter-relation of the virtues in lung-actions, furnishes, I believe, the source of Chaucer's present medical theory. Gilbertus takes the cough as his point of departure in discussing the virtues. Though there is no universally accepted medical tradition upon the matter — differences of opinion are wide and well known, says he in effect — still, because the inter-relation of the virtues in producing voluntary action of the lungs is so easily comprehended, he states his proposition boldly and with conviction: "The cough is a movement resulting from the combined action of the *virtus animalis* and the *virtus naturalis*. It must employ naturally the instruments of that *spiritus* which is active in expelling superfluous and noxious matter from the body. The *virtus naturalis*, in which there is injury, may initiate an impulse to activity in the instruments of the *spiritus*, but it is not of itself able to complete the movement resulting in expulsion; it may in-



cite but not consummate ejection except by employing the mediation of that virtue which has control over the nerves and muscles of the bodily members. It is necessary, therefore, that the initial impulse felt in the tubes of the lungs should receive aid from the *virtus animalis* before the fumes can be repressed and the noxious materials expelled.”<sup>38</sup> He then proceeds to show that the *virtus animalis* has the power to move the cartilages of the lung-passages and to cast out that which is harmful to the *virtus naturalis* by employing two modes of action, *sensus* and *motus*.<sup>39</sup> Expressing itself in the capacity of *sensus*, the *virtus animalis* feels or apprehends the presence of that which is noxious to the *virtus naturalis*, and in the capacity of *motus* expels it. Above the *virtus naturalis*, then, stands the *virtus animalis* with its joint activities, *sensus* and *motus*, each having a special function to perform in keeping the *virtus naturalis* in a healthy and normal condition. The *sensus* or apprehension is therefore prior to *motus*, because without apprehension or consciousness of that which is harmful or beneficial to the *virtus naturalis* there can be no voluntary action in the expulsion or retention of it.

Gilbertus further conceives of the *motiua* as appearing under two distinct aspects, *imperans* and *imperata*: “*Imperans* is what gives commands to nerves and muscles in any action involving choice or rejection of that which is consistent or inconsistent with the body’s well-being; the *imperata* is that which moves the members of the body through the contraction and expansion of their muscles,” as in the movement of the bodily members from place to place, breathing, and such like. The

*motiua imperans* is, therefore, said to have its seat of action in the brain and the *motiua imperata* in the nerves.<sup>40</sup> And after further detailed discussion, he sums up the whole matter as follows: "When anything harmful secures entrance to the lung-passages or injures in any way the muscles having control over the expansion and contraction of the breast, then on account of the presence of the *virtus animalis* the *sensus* takes cognizance of the disturbance, the *motiua imperans* calls for immediate relief, and the *motiua imperata* moves the appropriate latitudinal and transverse muscles and nerves to expulsion. Such a movement of the lungs and breast, so initiated and carried out, is called a cough. The *virtus naturalis* has, moreover, four activities, *digestiua*, *appetitiua*, *retentiua*, and *expulsiua*, which originate in the liver; since the seat of the *sensus* is in the brain, it is quite apparent that there can be no precise adaptation of the instruments to the work in hand unless nature gives the initial impulse. When, therefore, the mind becomes conscious of an injury in the *virtus naturalis* on account of the presence of something odious to nature, then the *virtus animalis* acts for the purpose of expelling the superfluous matter; the muscles and nerves are put to their normal functions, and expulsion is completed. Thus the cough is a movement resulting from the combined action of the *virtus animalis* and the *virtus naturalis*."<sup>41</sup>

Now this, as it seems to me, might well serve as a basis for the correct, though rather technical, diagnosis of Arcite's malady occasioned by his injury. That virtue expulsive, in this case *animalis*, which is concerned

with the action of the lungs in expelling superfluous and noxious matter by means of the cough, is unable to cleanse the *virtus naturalis* from that which hinders the exercise of its proper appetitive, digestive, retentive, and expulsive functions. The *sensus* doubtless apprehends the existence of a violent disturbance in the region of Arcite's breast, the *virtus motiua imperans* calls upon the nerves and muscles to remove the noxious humours; but the *virtus motiua imperata* is powerless to carry out the command because the "pypes of the longes" are swollen and the longitudinal, latitudinal, and transverse muscles — "every lacerte in his brest" — are broken or torn and "shent with venim and corrupcioun." In short, Arcite cannot cough at all, and in consequence cannot rid his lungs of the unnatural humours collecting there. The result is disastrous. Cold air not having free circulation in the lung-passages, the liver is straightway disorganised by corrupted air; it sends impure blood to the heart and hence to all parts of the body, so that presently the "clothered blood . . . corrupteth, and is in his bouk y-laft." And the heart, since it is not properly and naturally tempered by cold air from the lungs and since it is oppressed by blood from the liver surcharged with hot and dry humours — cholic and melancholic — becomes overheated and so strangles or smothers. The "vital strengthe is lost an al ago" — and the spirit of Arcite changes house.

From the mediaeval point of view, however, no diagnosis of a disease can be quite complete or trustworthy unless it is based upon astrological observation. As we have already seen, medical men must know how the

planets in certain positions and combinations cause particular diseases, which may be cured only under special astrological conditions. The planets must be consulted upon not only the best kinds of medicines to be administered but also upon the exact time most appropriate for giving them. Cupping and blood-letting are especially subject to planetary influence, certain hours being more favorable than others. When Arcite's malady is considered astrologically, therefore, it is found to have been caused by Saturn indirectly, as we have seen; and this same wicked planet is directly responsible for the internal complications which finally produce death. Richard Saunders explains in his work, *The Astrological Judgment and Practice of Physic*, that there are in the bodies of men four radical virtues — he refers to the functions of the *virtus naturalis* — “holding a due proportion by Nature, by the which health and strength of body is always maintained; and when any one of these four do predominate and get dominion over the other, then doth the body wax sick, and languish in pain, and so surprised and overcome by death.”<sup>42</sup> Of these four there are two that are directly opposed the one to the other, the retentive and the expulsive; and when the expulsive faculty is hurt or weakened in any manner, then the retentive virtue becomes unduly strong and dangerous in proportion. Now the first stroke of Saturn, as we have noted, is to have injured the lungs and the surrounding muscles of Arcite so that the expulsive virtue, whose office is “to drive out and expell all superfluities in the veins or arteries that do annoy or are hurtful to Nature,” cannot function at all. This presents

his opportunity for acting directly and fatally.<sup>43</sup> For all astrologers interested in medicine affirm that *the retentive virtue belongs to and is ruled over by Saturn.*<sup>44</sup> Thus the expulsive faculty having been injured, the greater infortune sets about deliberately working through the *virtus retentiua*, his own special field of action in the body, for the death of his enemy.

It is evident, therefore, that the final scene of conflict between the planets is in the body of Arcite. Mr. Saunders says further: "Sometimes this expulsive virtue is hurt or weakened so that he cannot do his office in expelling the humours and excrements of the body as he should or ought to do, either by heat or drowth, or by both; by heat in respect of choler and blood; by drowth, in respect of choler and melancholy; but most of all it is impeded and hindered by drowth, either of choler or melancholy, superabundantly abounding in the body."<sup>45</sup> And in Arcite's case the accumulation of hot and dry humours, choleric and melancholic, is the work of Saturn through the manipulation of the retentive virtue. "Unnatural retention," proceeds Mr. Saunders, "is caused of unnatural melancholy, whether it be in the extreme parts, or in the inward parts; and by reason of this unnatural retention a man falleth into a consumption; when the consumption is either particular, or general, in one member or throughout the whole body, by reason of the unnatural melancholy impacted in the veins in some particular place, or spread abroad generally in the body, this kind of melancholy is more dry than that which is natural, and by reason of the dryness thereof, stoppeth the veins and passages, that the blood

cannot have free passage as it ought, to give nourishment to the body or to the members; and this unnatural melancholy overcometh the natural melancholy.”<sup>46</sup> This is precisely what happens in Arcite’s malady. Physicians do all in their power to relieve his system from the oppression of melancholic and choleric humours impacted in the veins and arteries by the malignancy of Saturn, but without result. They have recourse to the letting of blood from the veins by cupping,<sup>47</sup> probably by the use of fire with or without scarification; but the clotted and coagulated blood corrupts in his chest about his lungs. They administer emetics and purgatives, and no doubt digestives<sup>48</sup> of choleric and melancholic humours, but to no purpose. The expulsive virtue is powerless to act; the retentive virtue has absolute dominion over nature. And in the continued exercise of this retentive virtue, Saturn is finally victorious.

After this manner, it seems to me, Chaucer has built up back of the patent conflict between Palamon and Arcite in the *Knight’s Tale* the story of another struggle between the influences of two planets. With meticulous care and with painstaking accuracy of detail he has succeeded in transferring the motivating power in the narrative from the pagan gods, who are to him probably little more than poetic fancies, to the planets of the same name, in order that the unusual ending of the story’s action — victory to each of two knights who fight for the hand of the same lady — might be made reasonable to the readers of his own day, who believed in astrology but not in the divinity of the ancient gods. Since the conflict is between Saturn and Mars, Chaucer



has created a typical Saturnalian man, Lycurgus, King of Thrace, to champion the cause of Palamon, who is under the protection of the greater infortune, and a Martial man, Emetreus, King of India, to support Arcite, protégé of the lesser infortune. And, finally, he has let it be known that Saturn has conquered in the struggle by directly increasing the retentive virtue, over which he has control, in the injured body of his enemy, Arcite. The poet has thus motivated independently and anew the story received from Statius and Boccaccio. Thus certain passages, which at first sight may seem to be digressions or unassimilated elements of the narrative as Chaucer presents it, are discovered to be organic and absolutely essential to the technique of the finished story.

## II

Upon precisely what source or sources the English poet drew for his astrological interpretation of the pagan gods, it would be hard to determine with certainty. But I have observed that he is original only in his artistic use of it in the motivation of a given story; the interpretation was common enough in his day. To thinkers of the Middle Ages, myths about the ancient gods were merely figments of the poetic imagination or creations of the philosophic mind put forward to express an esoteric meaning. There seems to have been in general two schools of interpretation: that of the natural philosophers, who sought to give rational explanations of these poetic imaginings according to the principles of natural philosophy or physics,<sup>49</sup> and that of the *mathematici*, or

astronomers, and later of the astrologers. We are interested only in the latter.

As early as the twelfth century Albericus, *philosophus*, arranges the gods whose persons he is describing in their astronomical order and indicates by remarks, introduced independently of his sources,<sup>50</sup> that they are to be considered as planets and not as gods. He says, for example, that "Venus holds the fifth place among the planets, and on that account she is described fifthly,"<sup>51</sup> that "Mercury comes sixth in the order of the planets, and therefore among the ancients he was said to be sixth among the gods," and so on. In a later and much fuller work, *Allegoriae poetiarum*, he gives a more or less complete compendium of opinion on the gods, their nature and appearance as painted by the poets, myths concerning them, philosophical interpretations of the mythical history, their nature and influence as planets, and interpretations of the fables according to the *matici*.<sup>52</sup> And always he assumes that the astronomical interpretation is correct. If Chaucer drew from this source his descriptions of the persons of Venus, Mars, and Diana in the *Knight's Tale* — and Skeat's suggestion to that effect seems plausible — it is reasonable to suppose that he may have received from this same source the idea of treating the gods as planets. Be that as it may, in 1366 Bartholomaeus Anglicus wrote his *De proprietatibus rerum*, in which he discusses the planets and explains by reference to their astrological natures certain myths concerning the gods of the same names. He notes, for example, that Saturn is the most sinister of all the planets, cold and dry, and that he is therefore

painted in fables as an old man with a crooked staff.<sup>53</sup> Jupiter by his goodness abates the malice of Saturn when they are in conjunction, and therefore poets feign that he put his father out of the kingdom.<sup>54</sup> Mercury is a planet whose influence is good with good planets and evil with evil, so that when he is conjoined with Venus their qualities mingle; therefore poets have imagined that he did fornication with Venus. He makes men studious and lovers of the sciences and all kinds of knowledge; therefore poets speak of him as the god of fair-speaking and of wisdom.<sup>55</sup> The Sun is red at dawn, brightly shining in the morning, hot at noon, and pale in the afternoon; therefore poets fancy that he had four horses, of whom the first was red, the second bright, the third burning, and the fourth pale or loving the earth. In a nativity he makes men fair and swift; therefore in fables he is painted with feathers and with Achilles's face, and is called Phoebus.<sup>56</sup> Luna gives plenteousness of seeds to the earth and waters them with dew that falls from her body; therefore according to fables she is called Proserpina, goddess of seeds. She also gives light to beasts and wild things that gather their food by night in woods and groves; she is therefore fabled as the goddess of hunting and is painted with a bow in her hand.<sup>57</sup> This will doubtless be sufficient to show that by Chaucer's time the astrological interpretation of allegories about the pagan gods was not unusual. It may be noted that when Batman comes to translate Bartholomaeus's work in 1397, he adds more myths and indulges in astrological interpretation at great length.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, Robert Greene's manner of treating the gods

as astrological planets must be emphasised in contrast with that of Chaucer. In the Introduction to *Planetomachia* (1585) Greene has much to say concerning the astrological significance of ancient myths. He conceives of Daedalus, for example, as that perfect astrologer who instructed his son in the mysteries of it. "But Icarus tickled forward with the heate of youth, and trusting to much in his vnperfect skill, began at first to search the depths of Astrologie, and to wade so far in the intricate misteries thereof, that climbing to hie he erred from the truth, and fell headlong into the deepe Sea of supernaturall conceipts; whereof the Gretians said he was drowned in the Sea."<sup>59</sup> Eneas was not really the son of Venus, nor Mynos of Jupiter, nor Autolycus of Mercury; these myths mean simply that these persons had, respectively, these planets in their nativities. Neither did Jupiter cast Saturn into bonds, nor throw him headlong into hell, nor offer him those unnatural indignities which the poets have imagined; but since Saturn is a planet very slow in his motion and so far removed from our horizon that his movements may scarcely be marked by men, he is consequently said to stand as though he were in chains. "Who so considereth the sacred and misticall verses of Homer and Hesiod, shall find their fiction did tende to the discoverie of Astrologie. For whereas he telleth of the Chaîne of Jupiter and of the Darts of Sol, I doe think he meaneth their irradiations."<sup>60</sup> But in order that the science may be made more interesting, Greene has staged a mighty dispute in the heavens — modeled perhaps upon that in the *Knight's Tale* — between Saturn and his daughter

Venus. The other gods take sides, and Sol is appointed by common consent to act as sole arbiter. For some time the controversy rages over which is more wicked in the nativities of men, Saturn or Venus, in the course of which the author succeeds in bringing out the astrological nature of the gods and their respective influences in mundane affairs. "But," says he in an address to the Gentlemen Readers, "that I might not be too tedious to young minds, I have interlaced my Astronomicall discourse with pleasaunt Tragedies, that your profitable Haruest may be gleaned together with delightful paines." Consequently, after Venus has given an astronomical description of the wicked Saturn and has remarked upon the melancholy natures of Saturnists, she proceeds to narrate a tragedy in which, as Sol judges, the final catastrophe is brought about by Saturn's malefic influence;<sup>61</sup> and Saturn, in turn, gives a story in which the tragic ending is occasioned by the power of Venus in the nativities of the chief characters.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, Greene is resorting to the literary device of illustrating the science of astrology with stories, in which the motivating power is the influence of Saturn and Venus. Now this is precisely what Chaucer does not do. He is not interested chiefly in astrology; the *Knight's Tale* is in no sense presented to illustrate the influence of Saturn and Mars in the affairs of the two heroes. On the other hand, Chaucer is immensely and primarily interested in the forward action of his story and in the conflicting passions of his characters. And in order that this action and these emotions may be rationalised for his readers of the Middle Ages, he has

made of scientific astrology a handmaiden to his literary art.

### III

But so far Chaucer has by no means finished adding to the original story of Palamon and Arcite sundry independent passages, by the assimilation of which largely his ancient source-material has been transformed into that marvellously unified fourteenth century narrative, the *Knight's Tale*. His age was not merely scientific; it was deeply philosophical, an age when philosophy must be made broad or elastic enough to compass all the sciences and nature itself. While Chaucer the artist may perhaps rest content with having accomplished the motivation of a story by reference to astral influences, Chaucer the thinker and inquirer into ultimate problems finds it necessary or expedient to consider the philosophical implications of his innovations. For the *Knight's Tale* is fashioned out of vivid life-materials, in which there is mingled much of human joy and distress, hope, grief, tragedy, and death. Since the tears and sorrows of old folk and folk of tender years are infinite and since in this world there is great pain, Chaucer will not permit these things to be left ultimately to the cold, unsympathetic direction of the stars; life would be unbearable if it were subject to these natural or mechanical processes alone. Consequently, he is impelled to introduce additional passages of philosophical import in which he attempts to solve in some measure the problem of humanity's variegated fortune in its relation to the destinal power of the planets and to Providence. His



solution is evidently based upon the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius.<sup>63</sup>

That part of Boethius's philosophical system which is pertinent to the *Knight's Tale* is comparatively simple, schematized, mechanical, and rigid. In general it deals with God's "simplicity" or one-ness in relation to the heterogeneity or multifariousness of His creations; in particular it treats of questions concerning the nature of Providence, the orders of destiny, the processes of fortune, and the significance of so-called chance or accident. How does a God infinitely removed intervene in the affairs of men dwelling upon this mundane sphere? This God, stable, indivisible, and benevolent, transmits the power of his will through successive stages of action, each one of which, as it is discovered to be farther and farther away from the unchangeable divine source, shows more and more diversity, change, and alteration than the one before. First, standing outside and aloof upon the "tower" of His simplicity or one-ness, God plans in His divine reason a universe as a complete and final whole, an entirely unified conception so infinite that it embraces every possible part—the creation of all things, the progressions of changing nature, all forms, causes, movements, that have been or can be. This ordinance, assembled and unified in the divine thought, is called Providence.<sup>64</sup> Secondly, in order that this conception may be realized in all its diverse particulars, Providence delegates executive powers to a blind force called Destiny, which administers in detail whatever Providence has planned. But because Destiny is somewhat removed from the absolutely stable center of di-

vine intelligence, it necessarily becomes split up and divided into many manifestations; Providence is One, but he administers through Destiny in many manners and at various times that which as a whole he has ordained. Thus, whether Destiny be exercised by divine spirits (servants of Providence), or by some soul (*anima mundi*), or by all Nature serving God, or by the celestial movings of stars, or by virtue of angels, or by the machinations of devils, by any of these or by all of them together, the destinal ordinance is woven and accomplished.<sup>65</sup>

Thirdly, this Destiny so divided or distributed sends its influences outward and still farther away from the stable center until they move upon still another blind and capricious force called Fortune, whose function it is (being personified as a sort of goddess) to rule over the checkered careers of human beings in this world. And because this plane of activity is the farthest possible removed from the one-ness characteristic of Providence, the chief qualities of Fortune are mutability, change, instability, and irrationality. In other words, whatever comes to a man in this precarious existence — for example, birth, riches, power, happiness, grief, sorrow, reverses, friendship, love, death, anything and everything — is the immediate gift of Fortune. This unsympathetic, erratic force which continually whirls human beings from good to bad, from poverty to riches or from eminence to destruction, cares no more for one man than for another; its activities *seem* in their infinite capriciousness and diversity to be entirely illogical and chaotic.<sup>66</sup> But they only *seem* so to those who are ig-

norant or themselves blinded by success or adversity. For Fortune has two aspects; namely, (a) that "common" Fortune, which represents all common experiences of humanity such as birth, growth, disposition, love, death; and (b) that more personal Fortune, according to which an individual may be born at a certain time and place, grow up in this or that environment, perform a great variety of acts according to his disposition, love one person in particular, and die in youth or middle age by war or flood or poison. Thus any given experience of a man is likely to be the complex result of the combined influence of two or more destinal forces. Fortune as "common" comes from the moving of Destiny as Nature. Or to speak in poetic terms, God binds together the diverse elements of His creation and maintains their proper status by the universal bond of Love; planets follow their prescribed courses without faltering, for example; seasons follow each other in regular order, neither day nor night encroaches upon the province of the other, the sea remains within its limited bounds, men's lives progress in general from birth and youth to age and death, and people are joined together in the holy sacrament of marriage — all this because God has bound them by the chain of Love.<sup>67</sup> But Fortune in its more personal bearings may be the result not only of Destiny as Nature but also of other destinal forces such as, for example, that of the stars. It is Fortune in this latter aspect that is sometimes spoken of as chance or "hap" or "aventure of fortune" or accident.<sup>68</sup> But if accident be taken to mean that which comes to pass without cause or design, there is really no such thing. What

through ignorance is called chance is nothing more than an occurrence whose causes are not understood. When, say, a man digs in a field for the purpose of planting seeds and finds a pot of gold, no one should say that this chances without cause. The causes for this and for everything else, though perhaps not perceived by finite men, stretch back in an unbroken order through Destiny to the divine plan in God's mind. For all things that are, or can be, are inescapably bound together and unified in the ordinance of Providence. It is only because men are so short-sighted that they rail at the mutability of Fortune or the cruelty of Destiny (or Fate) or even at Providence itself. But he who is philosophical of mind and stays his thought upon the stability of God may rise in some measure above the vicissitudes of Fortune.

Now of all the destinal forces manifesting themselves in the affairs of men — "whether exercised by divine spirits (servants of Providence), or by some soul, or by all Nature serving God, or by the celestial movings of stars, or by virtue of angels, or by the machinations of devils, by any of these or by all of them together" — that which seems to appeal most strongly to Chaucer as artist is the celestial movings of stars. Time and again he refers both character and action to planetary influences. For example, when Criseyde determines to return home after a visit with her uncle Pandarus, her going is prevented by Providence working through the high heavens. "But O Fortune, executrix of fates," says Chaucer, "O influences of these high heavens, it is truth that, under God, you are our shepherds, though

to us beasts the causes are hidden. She started home, but by the gods' will it was executed other than she desired. For because the bent Moon joined with Saturn and Jupiter in Cancer brought a deluge of rain, she was compelled to remain" (*T. C.*, III, 617). Again, in the *Marchant's Tale* the narrator is in light mood undecided what combination of destinal forces brings May to bestow her love upon Damian: "Whether it was by destiny or by chance, by the influence (of spirits), or by nature, or by the power of a constellation thus-or-so placed in the heavens that it was a favorable time for presenting a love-letter to a woman to get her love, I cannot say; let that great God above, who knows that no act is causeless, judge the matter." We have already seen elsewhere,<sup>69</sup> moreover, that the Destiny governing the Wife of Bath resides in a conjunction of Venus and Mars in Taurus; it is evident that the destinal forces hanging over Hypermnestra, in the *Legend of Good Women*, are lodged in the movements of Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn, and that Constance's fortunes in the *Man of Law's Tale* are in large measure subject to the power of Mars and Luna cadent from an angle in Scorpio and the eighth house.<sup>70</sup>

Now let us return to a further study of the *Knight's Tale*. Having demonstrated that the fortunes of Palamon and Arcite are to a great extent the result of destinal movings of stars, Chaucer now proceeds to philosophise the whole situation by referring this Destiny back to God. Throughout the story both Palamon and Arcite indulge in lamentations which indicate that neither is able to see clearly through Fortune, at least not farther

than Destiny. When they are placed in prison, Arcite concludes at first that it is Fortune who has brought this adversity upon them, but he immediately traces these evil influences back to some ordinance written in the heavens, to some constellation in which Saturn is powerful (A, 1086). But for the most part he is so blinded by passion that, when he escapes from prison, his thought is only upon earthly things; he is distressed to imagine that "by some chance, since fortune is changeable" Palamon, being near his love, may attain his desire. This thought is as a death to him. Then he remembers that there is said to be a Providence which, working out the fortunes of men, often gives in many a guise better blessings than they could themselves conceive; he does not understand how or why it should be so, but he repents of having complained when he was in prison and comparatively happy, seeing that he is now free and utterly miserable (A, 1257). But Palamon revolts outright against the Fortune that has come upon him; he finds the gods, who are supposed to rule this world by their eternal word written in the "table of athamaunt," guilty of being cruel beyond measure or else senseless, since they seem to have no more compassion for a man than for a sheep. They torment the innocent, while the guilty often go free; he himself is in prison because of Saturn and is likely to be slain by the jealousy of Venus. He is perplexed in the extreme because his comprehension extends only to the changeableness of Fortune; he only knows that in this world there is great pain (A, 1303). Neither Palamon nor Arcite is wise enough to solve the problem of human suffering in relation to Des-



tiny and Providence, but their pitiful cryings in the dark serve admirably to impress upon the reader's mind the necessity for some solution.

Once Chaucer himself steps outside the story long enough to remark that everything which may transpire in this world is precisely as God planned it. Even so slight an occurrence as Theseus's meeting with Palamon and Arcite in the forest may be brought within the perfect scheme of things, though it may appear accidental. "Destiny, the general minister which executes everywhere in this world the purveyance seen by God before," says he, "is so strong that, though the world had sworn the contrary of a thing, yet it must come to pass if only once in a thousand years. For certainly our appetites here, whether concerned with war or peace or hate or love, are ruled by the sight above" (A, 1663). It is Theseus's nature to love hunting especially in May, and partly on that account he meets Palamon and Arcite in the forest. But it is the wise Theseus who, near the end of the story, concludes the whole matter. Even the Theseus taken directly from Boccaccio's *Teseide* has known much of this world's transmutation, as he has seen it changing up and down, joy after woe and woe after gladness. Just as no man ever died who did not first live, so no man ever lived who has not died (A, 2837-2846).<sup>71</sup> Everything must have an end—the hardy oak decays at last, the hard stone wastes away, and every man, be he king or page, must come to the common end of all mankind (A, 3017-3034). Then no one ought to mourn or complain at the passing of Arcite, seeing that he died in the flower of life, sure of

his good name and fame; his friends ought rather to rejoice because he departed out of the prison of this life with honor before the weakness of old age overtook him (A, 3041-3065).<sup>72</sup> But it is Theseus of the *Knight's Tale* who has studied Boethian philosophy and can pierce beyond the mutability of Fortune in this world to the stability of God. After Arcite has been dead for some years and the mourning and tears have stopped, he sends quietly for Palamon and Emily. When they have come and the place is hushed, he speaks: "When the first Mover of the cause above made the fair chain of Love, great was the result and high was his intent. He knew why and what his purpose was. For with that fair chain of Love he constrained the fire, the air, the land, and the water within certain bounds so that they may not escape. That same Prince and Mover has established in this wretched world certain days and duration to all that is created, beyond which span of time they may not pass though it may be shortened. Then by this order men may well understand that this Mover is stable and eternal. Well may men know, unless one be a fool, that every part of creation is derived from the whole (in God's mind); for Nature has not taken its beginning from any part of a thing, but from that which is stable and perfect, descending thence until it is corruptible. And therefore, of his wise Providence he has so fixed his ordinance that species of things and progressions (of birth, life, death) shall continue by successions and not be eternal" (A, 2987-3015). Thus Arcite's death, like that of every other man, belongs to the "common" Fortune of all corruptible things, is but an in-

cident in the progressions of Nature. And whatever may have been the destinal cause of his more personal Fortune, that too may be included in the Providence of God. "Who brings all these things about but Jupiter the King — (i.e., God)? He is Prince and the cause of all things, converting everything back to its proper source from which it was first derived" (3035-3038).

In conclusion, it must be observed that in the *Knight's Tale* Chaucer has used both astrological and philosophical material with admirable restraint and artistry. The main question here is not whether he actually believed in either astrology or Boethian philosophy — though I have an idea he had faith in both — but whether he has employed them successfully in the artistic reworking of an ancient tale. Not being primarily a scientist, he has used only so much astrological material as serves to establish the destinal power of the stars, in some measure, over the fortunes of Palamon and Arcite; not being primarily a philosopher, he employs only so much of the Boethian philosophy as will direct all destinal forces back to their original source. Under the guidance of Boethius he might easily have solved the problems of free-will, predestination, and the relation of innocence or guilt to human suffering or happiness. But why should he do it here? He is principally interested in the story and not in philosophy. Consequently, having motivated his story by reference to the stars and having traced destinal forces back to Providence, he leaves the *Knight's Tale* a complete, well-rounded, homogeneous piece of artistic workmanship.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

NOT only in the *Knight's Tale* but also in the *Legend of Hypermnestra* and in the *Man of Law's Tale*, where the incidents of a story are already fixed and the elements of character largely determined, Chaucer introduces the motivating power of the stars. In these two narratives he attempts, I believe, to explain to his audience the action of a ready-made story and to rationalise a given character by the process of referring them to astral influence, by interpolating nativities which seem to govern and direct the prescribed action.

Introducing a nativity in the *Legend of Hypermnestra* is apparently something in the nature of an experiment on Chaucer's part. For the authentic incidents of the story he consults presumably every available authority, Ovid, Boccaccio, and possibly Gower; <sup>1</sup> and in all of them he finds that only one of the fifty daughters of Danaüs, who were married to the fifty sons of Aegyptus, failed to slay her husband at her father's command. Why? The story as it stands in the sources is entirely unmotivated and therefore not so artistic as it might be. Straightway Chaucer sets about supplying the missing motivating power in the form of a nativity, which to some extent explains Hypermnestra's character and hence her unusual actions.

Ypermnistra, yongest of hem alle;  
The whiche child, of her nativitee,  
To alle gode thewes born was she,  
As lyked to the goddes, or she was born,  
That of the shefe she sholde be the corn;  
The Wirdes, that we clepen Destinee,  
Hath shapen her that she mot nedes be  
Pitouse, sadde, wyse, and trewe as steel.

The horoscope is general and indefinite enough, but it will serve for an experiment. Chaucer continues:

For, though that Venus yaf her greet beautee,  
With Jupiter compouned so was she  
That conscience, trouthe, and dreed of shame,  
And of her wyfhood for to kepe her name,  
This, thoughte her, was felicitee as here.  
And rede Mars was, that tyme of the yere,  
So feble, that his malice is him raft,  
Repressed hath Venus his cruel craft;  
What with Venus and other oppressioun  
Of houses, Mars his venim is adoun,  
That Ypermnistra dar not handle a knyf  
In malice, thogh she sholde lese her lyf.  
But natheles, as heven gan tho turne,  
To badde aspectes hath she of Saturne,  
That made her for to deyen in prisoun,  
As I shall after make mencion (LGW. 2575 ff.).

Venus's influence, it would seem, is responsible for Ypermnestra's beauty of person and for the partial suppression of Mars's malice; and Jupiter, joined in some benevolent aspect with Venus, has been most powerful

in the creation of her gentle, sympathetic character and her marital fidelity. As the heavens revolve, however, the progress of Saturn into a position of evil aspect results in her untimely death.

Even a casual glance at any mediaeval astrology will show that Chaucer's interpretation of these planetary influences is scientifically correct. Baptista Porta gives a compendium of authoritative opinions regarding the beauty of person bestowed by Venus upon the fortunate native: "Venus mistress of a nativity (says Maternus) gives to the native a tall, elegant, white body, pleasing eyes sparkling with splendid beauty, and thick hair agreeably fluffy and sometimes curly or charmingly waving. Venus is similar to Jupiter (says Haly), except that it is her particular province to bestow more charm, greater beauty, and a better conceived, more finely formed, and more alluring and seductive body (seeing that Venus is responsible for that grace and elegance peculiar to women); a woman so born is milder and gentler. Others say that she is frail and slender, having dark eyes, delicate eyebrows joined together, tender lips, a full face, a magnificent breast, short ribs, and well-developed thighs; her general appearance is most attractive, and her figure is refined and elegant. . . . And Messahala says she has black eyes, in which the dark appears more than in those of other people, beautiful hair, and a face becoming round and plumb but not too full."<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered, however, that the children of Venus are in their marriage relations "volatile, capricious, and inconstant to a high degree, especially when they are not maintained sumptuously



and in grand style; and they are certainly more contented and happy if they are permitted as many separations and divorces as there are numbered principles of love." Hence Chaucer is careful to qualify: "*Although Venus gives Hypermnestra her beauty*, it is the participation of *Jupiter* with Venus that is responsible for her tenderness and truth and fidelity to her husband and wifely duty." For Jupiter is exceedingly beneficent when he is alone in the nativity and entirely unoppressed by evil influences: "If Jupiter is discovered lord of a nativity," says Haly, "alone and in a good position, he makes the native of great nobility of mind, honorable, virtuous and pure, of fine reputation, just, morally upright and religious, frank and free, gentle of disposition, quiet, unruffled, eschewing vain things; such a person loves and is beloved by people who perform beautiful and honest deeds, meditates and plans good actions while wishing to have them secret and unnoticed, is diligent in well-doing, and knows how to guard, serve, and retain friends."<sup>3</sup> Now when these two planets, separately so favorable, are discovered together, beneficently placed in good aspect the one to the other and free from destructive influences, the resultant power for good is particularly strong: "If Jupiter is in agreement with Venus and in a favorable position," says Haly, "the native is likely to be illustrious and distinguished; — one who delights in beauty, has an earnest desire to acquire knowledge, approves of plays, games, and jests, is pleased with benevolent deeds and characterised by honorable conduct; one who, having honest and pure inclinations and virtuous desires, fears God, rejoices in right principles

and in keeping good faith, loves to defend the law, and delights in people of gentle disposition; one who derives pleasure from the examination and study of books, who is honest and upright in dealings with the opposite sex, and who observes righteousness, duty, and justice.”<sup>4</sup>

These passages illustrate how much Chaucer the artist leaves to the imagination of his readers; he has only indicated the noble character of Hypermnestra when he says that she was born to all good manners, that the Destinies made her tender-hearted and compassionate, wise, earnest, stable, and true as steel. He is also careful — though without any attempt to deal in technicalities — to state that Mars is feeble in his influence, being dominated by Venus and suppressed by various and sundry afflictions of houses. Professor Skeat’s learned note, in which he attempts to locate precisely the position of Mars (III, 384), is gratuitous. If Mars *had* been in power, however, Hypermnestra would undoubtedly have been able to use the fatal knife without a qualm. In the case of the Wife of Bath we have already seen the disastrous results when Mars rules in oppression over Venus. But here Chaucer is interested in emphasising the general influences of the several planets; it is quite sufficient for his present purpose to point out that Mars was feeble.

He says, however, that at some time in the course of the stars’ revolution, Saturn’s malignant power became directed against the freedom and life of Hypermnestra. As we have seen in the discussion of the *Knight’s Tale*, Saturn is the most potent and evil of all planets; he is envious, covetous, jealous, a malicious dissembler, the

servant of anger and the begetter of strife, delighting in destruction wherever he is able to accomplish it. He works havoc in every sign of the zodiac and in dominion over any of the other planets; "he has power over dirty waters, long wanderings, prisons, chains, afflictions, and the substance of dead men." <sup>5</sup> Alubather shows especially, in his observations "*De natis incarcerandis*," that Saturn brings about death by imprisonment, particularly when in aspect with Venus and Jupiter. <sup>6</sup> How, then, should Hypermnestra escape?

After this manner would Chaucer rationalise the life and character of Hypermnestra. Having provided a horoscope for her, he proceeds to lay great stress upon precisely those elements of her nature which are accounted for in the root of her nativity. She revels through the day of her marriage festivities like a true daughter of Venus and Jupiter; and when evening has come, she prepares to go meekly to the bed of her lord. But her father interrupts her passing with threats of death unless she will carry out his command to slay her husband that night. What should this pious, honest young wife do under such circumstances? The fatal knife is produced, from which she shrinks away in terror. Still, because of the fear in her timid heart, she hides the instrument in her robes and promises that her husband shall not live. The night is cold; the destined hour approaches. As she looks upon the face of him whom she must murder, all the tenderness and pity which the stars have bestowed upon her rises up in revolt against the infamous deed; staggering here and there about the room, she is torn by the inner conflict be-

tween fear, lest she should lose her own life, and her gentle feminine nature which recoils at the sight of a knife. And, besides, he is her husband; she has plighted her faith to him. It were better to die than to shame her wifely purity or to become a traitor to her marriage vows:

Now certes, quod she, sin I am his wyf,  
And hath my feith, yit is it bet for me  
For to be deed in wyfly honestee  
Than be a traitour living in my shame  
(*LGW.* 2699 ff.).

Weeping upon the face of her sleeping husband, she embraces him; he must escape through the window. After he has departed in safety, she awaits with a noble calmness the blow which must crush her because of her unselfishness. Her angry father sends her away to prison — where she must die. Chaucer's experiment — if I may call it so — is complete; he is moved, I think, at the pathetic spectacle of Hypermnestra's suffering, but by referring the outcome of the story to the influence of the stars he has given a semblance of meaning to life and has transformed an ancient tale into a work of art. There is little more to be said after Hypermnestra has been lodged in prison. Consequently the poet ends his story in the middle of a sentence, which apparently begins to point a moral; but since the tale has been adorned, he is doubtless artist enough to see that, for once, moralising would be out of place. Presumably, he never continues the writing of the *Legend of Good Women*. Some time after having finished his story of Hypermnestra, Chaucer sets about translating the pathetic, sad

story of Constance, into which he has introduced — either at the time of composition or later — the motivating influence of the stars.

## II

In this connection I do not wish to raise the vexed question of relative dates; my argument is not materially affected by the priority of either of these stories. I am merely treating the simpler case first as though it preceded in time the more complex — as it probably did.<sup>7</sup> Having satisfied himself that the rationalisation of a given story is made possible through the introduction of astrological material, we may suppose, Chaucer proceeds to place an exceedingly intricate and effective horoscope in the *Man of Law's Tale*. The original story is followed more or less closely up to the point where Constance, a devout Christian, is compelled to marry a pagan Sultan; whereupon the poet, intent upon explaining the succeeding misfortunes, breaks out in an apostrophe:

O firste moeving cruel firmament . . .  
Thy crowding set the heven in swich array  
At the beginning of this fiers viage,  
That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage.  
Infortunat ascendent tortuous,  
Of which the lord is helples falle, allas!  
Out of his angle in-to the derkest hous.  
O Mars, O Atazir, as in this cas!  
O feble mone, unhappy been thy pas!  
Thou knittest thee ther thou art nat receyved,  
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.  
(*C. T.*, B, 295 ff.)

Professor Skeat's analysis of this passage, is, in the main, correct (V, 150 ff.). He observes that the ascendent, tortuous sign — i.e., the sign just rising above the horizon — is Aries, one of the mansions of Mars. The lord of this sign, Mars, has just passed from an angle into a succeedant house, in this case from Libra into Scorpio, which is his other, darker mansion. Luna, also falling from an angle into a succeedant, is found to be in corporal conjunction with Mars without reception in Scorpio. What Professor Skeat does not observe is that when the horoscope is in Aries — for horoscopes in all other signs the situation would be different — the sign Libra happens to correspond with the seventh house of the horoscope and Scorpio with the eighth (see Plate V). This is a conjunction of Mars and Luna not only in the sign Scorpio but also in the eighth house of the horoscope. In order, then, to understand the full power of such a nativity upon the life and fortunes of Constance, the following data must be interpreted: the horoscope is in Aries; Mars, *casus ab angulo*, is discovered in Scorpio, which occupies the eighth house of the figure; Luna is also cadent, having passed from a favorable sign-angle, Libra-seventh, into an unfavorable sign-succeedant, Scorpio-eighth, where she is in conjunction with Mars \* (see Plate VI).

\* Explanation of these technical terms may aid in making the horoscope clearer. In ancient astrology a figure of the heavens takes the form of a circle with a diameter drawn from left to right, representing the eastern and western horizons, and with another diameter drawn at right angles, representing the meridian. The quadrants thus made are further divided each into three equal parts, forming what is called the "twelve



It is not quite clear whether Chaucer considers this horoscope a "nativity" or an "election." The science of "elections," much cultivated among the ancient and

PLATE V



houses of the figure." Of these the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth are called "angles"; the four succeeding these—second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh—are called "succeedants"; and the four after these—third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth—are called "cadents." Thus every quadrant (beginning from the cardinal points and progressing counter clockwise) has its angle, succeedant, and cadent house (see Plate V). Supposing this figure

mediaeval astrologers, exercises itself with nothing more than a careful observation of "days" and "hours" and the motions of stars and planets by which times are known to be either lucky or unlucky, as they agree or disagree with the nativities of persons desiring success in the business they are about to undertake. A nativity, on the other hand, is a certain configuration of stars at a person's birth which determines the course of his future life. At the birth of a child, therefore, the astrologer may prognosticate success or failure in business, happiness or unhappiness in life, and may foretell with certainty the specific things in which the native will be fortunate or unfortunate. An election — for example, to determine an auspicious time for beginning a journey — is useless and signifies nothing unless the root of a nativity is known and unless the figure erected for the election corresponds approximately with the horoscope at

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to be stationary, we find that the twelve signs of the zodiac pass in succession through all these houses. If, at a given moment, the sign Aries is just rising in the East, it occupies the first house of the figure, Taurus the second, and so on, until we come to Libra, which occupies the seventh house, and to Scorpio, which occupies the eighth (see Plate VI). Now, as we have seen, the seventh house is an angle and the eighth a succedant. Of the twelve signs of the zodiac each planet (except Luna) has two, called its "mansions," in which it is particularly powerful, or dignified. For example, Saturn's night mansion is Capricorn and his day mansion is Aquarius; Mars's two mansions are Aries and Scorpio, of which the darker is Scorpio. These signs in which the planets are said to be dignified are sometimes referred to as "houses" — as in Chaucer; but in order to distinguish them from the houses of the figure, I have consistently called them "mansions." Both Mars and Luna have passed — i.e., they are "cadent" — from the seventh to the eighth house, and so from the sign Libra into Scorpio, the night mansion of Mars.

birth. If the nativity indicates that the child just born will be unfortunate in marriage, it would be useless later to seek an "election" which might indicate a fortunate *time* for marriage; in such case *all* times would

PLATE VII



prove unfortunate. We may reasonably suppose, therefore, that the horoscope in question represents the conjunction of stars at Constance's birth; this is the "root of her nativity." Already at the beginning of her life, as any astrologer might have foretold, cruel Mars had

slain her marriages — both the first and the second, which were still in the future. Chaucer, indeed, laments the fact that no election<sup>8</sup> was made in preparation for the *journey* to the Sultan's country, pointing out that the root of the nativity is known:

Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,  
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun,  
Nat when the rote is of a birthe y-knowe?  
Allas! we ben to lewed or to slowe.

(*C. T.*, B, 312) \_

In an interpretation of Constance's horoscope, therefore, we may refer indiscriminately to both horary and genethiac astrology.

Mediaeval astrologers, who usually draw figures of the heavens representing horoscopes in all the signs of the zodiac, are agreed that a nativity in Aries predestines for the native a rather checkered and precarious life. Indagine finds that when Aries is rising *in oriente*, Capricorn is discovered *in medio coeli*, Libra *in occidente*, and Cancer *in imo coeli*, and proceeds to show the influence of each of these signs: "Capricorn *in medio coeli*," says he, "decrees for the native honors, wealth and the most lavish expenditure of it, personal prominence, (a knowledge of) the mysteries of religion, and subtlety of mind. Libra *in occasu* indicates courtly manners and life, which is approved by few because it is insecure; one is continually raised to high positions and then cast down, now somewhat at the head of affairs now at the tail, sometimes breathed upon by fortune and hilariously acclaimed, then forthwith afflicted by various calamities.

In addition, there is no advantage or benefit without its disadvantage or ill together with other loss or damage; in this case the envy of friends and companions brings to pass the greatest evil, but this loss, whatever it is, is amended by Cancer *in imo coeli.*"<sup>9</sup> Albumasar gives a broader view to the effect that Aries, rising under certain circumstances, afflicts cities and states with upheavals accompanied by conflicts "with arms, iron instruments, and the like, by murder, devastation, and ruin by fire; scorn and mockery shall light upon men and their actions, there shall be rapid alterations and changes from one condition to another, and deaths shall be greatly multiplied."<sup>10</sup> And Haly is of the opinion that in matrimonial matters "All three faces of Aries are evil."<sup>11</sup>

Now, for a horoscope in Aries, it must be observed the "significator" is the sign Scorpio, in this instance located in the eighth house of the figure. In interpreting the Constance nativity, therefore, one must give special attention to the position and status of that sign. For, as Professor Skeat has shown, Scorpio is "called the house of death, of trauaile, of harm, of domage, of strife, of bataille, of guilefulnesse and falsenesse, and of wit."<sup>12</sup> The casual position of this sign in the eighth house of the nativity produces peculiarly violent and adverse conditions. With regard to the eighth house Haly says: "This house is the significator of death, murder, strangling by suffocation, the destruction of men by fire and poison, of feebleness, infirmity, and the breaking of bodies by poverty, of great fear, dread, anxiety, and human miseries in this world."<sup>13</sup> And Indagine,

speaking of the eighth house in an Aries horoscope, observes: "The eighth mansion from the East is that of Scorpio. This is the house of death, terror, quaking, of dead men — and of inheritance. If the Sun is posited in this house, do not start upon a journey nor trust yourself upon the waters. Wherefore, in this house are compounded all wars, contentions from unjust causes, enmities, and the evils of women, especially if these originate in connection with inheritance."<sup>14</sup> Thus a malignant fortune prepared for Constance is indicated by the nature and position of Scorpio.

Moreover, Luna is cadent from an angle, having passed from the seventh-Libra, where Chaucer says she was well situated and therefore powerful in exerting a beneficent influence, into the eighth-Scorpio where she is not only without reception but in conjunction with Mars, the lesser infortune. Now any benevolent planet is weakened and debilitated in passing from an angle into a succedant house, or when it is in corporal conjunction with either of the infortunes, Saturn and Mars, without reception.<sup>15</sup> Among the ten "impediments" of the Moon to be considered in general prognostications, Haly notes the following: "Fourth, when she is in corporal conjunction with one of the infortunes. . . . Seventh, when she is cadent from an angle — for example, falling from the end of Libra into the beginning of Scorpio — ; and this is worse than any other misfortune of Luna, especially in marriages, in all the relations of women, and in journeys."<sup>16</sup> The same author remarks elsewhere "*De qualitate matrimonij contracti*": "If you discover Luna in an unfortunate position, such



as cadent from an angle in the eighth or twelfth house, you may say that evil shall come to both the parties contracting matrimony, and that they shall have trials and tribulations according to the nature of the house, of the infortune, and of the sign.”<sup>17</sup> Whereas before Luna was exalted in Libra and in the seventh house — “If indeed she is found in the seventh house, men shall be fortunate in their relations with women”<sup>18</sup> — she has now been weakened by passing into the eighth house and into Scorpio, a mansion of Mars: “If she is located in the eighth house, great mortality shall light upon men, and if she chances to be unfortunately aspected, it shall be worse; and if she should be in either of the mansions of Mars, death shall come to pass through strife and murder.”<sup>19</sup> Further regarding the significance of Luna in Scorpio, Haly affirms: “The location of Luna in all parts of Scorpio is the cause of much anxiety and sorrow, and because of such inadvertence she precipitates great evil upon herself. Great impediments and hindrances shall be set up for her because of wicked reports and rumors.”<sup>20</sup> And Albumasar is in substantial agreement: “Her location in the middle of Scorpio signifies many conflicts, and plottings, and pestilence, and deaths, battles, and wars coming upon men.”<sup>21</sup> This position of the moon, then, is particularly unfortunate in nativities or in elections for marriage or for a journey.

Not only that, but in Constance's nativity Mars is discovered to be cadent from an angle, situated in his darker mansion, Scorpio, occupying the eighth house of the figure. This argues definite misfortune, for, says Haly, “if the infortunes are posited in the eighth house,

they signify the destruction and death of enemies and manifold captivities,"<sup>22</sup> adding with special reference to Mars, the lesser infortune, "If he is placed in the eighth house, he shall be responsible for sudden and horrible death, in accordance with the nature of the sign in which he is located."<sup>23</sup> And Mars evidences his malignant influence particularly in all the faces of the sign, Scorpio: "In the first face of Scorpio he guards or conserves his powers, applying himself to that which he desires and accomplishing upon his enemies whatever he wishes. In the second face he is shameless and dishonest, envious and evil in his operations, serving himself with quarrels, brawls, and warfare. In the third face he delights much in exercising his angry nature upon women, assaulting them by bringing force to bear upon them."<sup>24</sup> And his power for evil, in this instance, is greatly augmented by virtue of his having fallen from an angle into one of his mansions where he has an essential dignity; "If Mars is in an evil position or if he is evilly affected by being retrograde or by being cadent from an angle," says Haly, "it signifies that he is powerful in planning and producing that which is in accordance with his nature, namely, fears, terrors, anxieties, perturbations of mind, evil thinking, wicked deliberations, and that which follows the execution of such; it signifies also many infirmities, and future afflictions through fire, robbers, or wild animals, journeys unfortunate and dangerous for the stranger wandering out of his native place, and bad blood between sisters and brothers."<sup>25</sup>

When, in addition, a debilitated Luna is found to be

in corporal conjunction with Mars in his own mansion where his dominion is supreme and undisputed, the resultant influence is disastrous particularly in matrimonial matters. Haly is of the opinion that "If Luna is joined with Mars, you may expect false rumors, lying reports, and the effusion of blood";<sup>26</sup> or according to Goclenius, "Mars elevated above Luna in Scorpio signifies captivities and seditions in many places";<sup>27</sup> or in the words of Ganivetus, "It is an unfortunate circumstance in matrimonial alliances when Luna is joined to either Mars or Saturn, because there shall be neither peace nor love between the contracting parties."<sup>28</sup> Chaucer indicates that, in this conjunction, the resultant influence is all the more virulent because the "feble" moon is not "received" by the lord of the ascendent, Mars. Now "reception" is a technical astrological term. A planet is said to be "in reception" when it passes into one of another planet's essential dignities, e.g., into one of its mansions. The planet whose mansion is thus invaded is called the "dispositor" because it "disposes of" or rules or governs, or receives the visitor. Ordinarily when the dispositor is one of the fortunes, or beneficent planets, a reception is not without good influence, especially so if the dispositor of the planet signifying the thing asked for is himself disposed by the lord of the ascendent, one of the fortunes.<sup>29</sup> But when the dispositor is one of the infortunes, Saturn and Mars, the influence of any planet "in reception" is vitiated and weakened. Since, in the horoscope under discussion, Luna is found to be situated in one of the mansions of Mars, Chaucer does not mean to say that she is without any reception at all; she

is not *well* received, coming as she does under the influence of the malefic. Now if you are interested in learning the main impediments to happy marriage, says Haly, "Discover the significators and consider which are receiving and which are received; for if the receptor is an infortune or cadent from an angle, the marriage will not be successful after it is made, or at best only half successful. And if the wicked infortunator is the lord of the second or eighth house, you may expect disturbances of the conjugal relations growing out of disagreements concerning the dowery."<sup>30</sup> Since Luna is not well received by the infortune Mars, lord of the eighth house and cadent from an angle, Chaucer may well cry out, as Constance prepares for her nuptials, that "cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage."

But what should be the significance of his exclamation, "O Mars, O Atazir, as in this cas"? This is a dark saying which of necessity must be scanned. So far as I am aware, only one lexicographer has attempted to give anything like an adequate definition of the term *atazir*. M. R. Dozy says: "Atacir is not in the dictionary, but it seems to have been cited from the thirteenth century. It is the Arabian word *al-tâthir*, which signifies *influence*; . . . it is especially the influence which the stars exercise either upon other stars or upon various objects, e.g., on things here below, on the destiny of the individual."<sup>31</sup> Though the precise astrological application of "atazir" was being spiritedly discussed among Arabian wise men long before the thirteenth century, still M. Dozy's general and rather indefinite explanation is, for the most part, correct. What he does not indicate

is that any concrete interpretation of the term *atazir* involves a consideration of its relation to *alcocoden* and particularly to *hyleg*, about which, says Haly, "the ancient wise men have vehemently disagreed among themselves, so that in continual and fierce contentions their exceedingly subtle and profound speculations have made disturbance and uproar."<sup>32</sup> Now *hyleg* is a term used in astrology to denote that position occupied by certain planets or parts of signs, from a consideration of which, in its relation to other planetary influences, exact prognostications regarding the *life or death* of the querent may be made. It is sometimes called "the point of life." Astrologers have disagreed violently over the number and location of *hylegia*; but all of them agree, I believe, that there are at least five *hylegiacal* places. In order to find the *hyleg* one must consider the position of the Sun, or of the Moon, or of the precise degree of the ascendent, or the Place of Fortune, or the location of conjunctions. From either one of these, posited in certain prescribed parts of the horoscope, the *hyleg* of the nativity may be determined. For example, Sol in the ninth house, in a masculine sign, and in quartile aspect with any one of his essential dignities, is said to "make *hyleg*" or may be called "the *hyleg*."<sup>33</sup> *Alcocoden* is nothing more than the name applied to the planet having the greatest power in *hyleg*; <sup>34</sup> enough of *alcocoden*. That which interests us especially in the nativity under discussion is the position of Luna. "Proceeding further and enquiring after the *hyleg*," says Haly, "observe Luna, and if you find her posited in an angle or in a succedant, and in a feminine sign, and in quartile aspect

with a feminine sign, and in aspect with any one of her dignities, then you may accept her in that position as the hyleg.”<sup>35</sup> Reference to Luna in the Constance-nativity shows that all of these conditions are satisfied: she is in a succeedant house, the eighth, in a feminine sign, Scorpio, and in quartile aspect<sup>36</sup> with the feminine sign, Cancer, which is her only mansion and therefore one of her essential dignities. Luna in this position is the hyleg of the nativity.

Having determined the hyleg in any figure, we are then ready to calculate — and interpret in terms of life and death, health or sickness, prosperity or misfortune — the influences, good or bad, which other planets direct by aspect upon that point. Now the influence resulting from such a calculation of planetary influences exerted upon the hyleg by reference to the aspects of various planets is what astrologers call *atazir*. As Alubather says: “The hyleg signifies the life and death of the native. And *per athazir eius ad aspectum* of the fortunate and unfortunate planets, you may know about the life and death of the native, according to the grace of God.”<sup>37</sup> These influences may be either good or bad, depending upon the nature of the planet in aspect, whether a fortune or an infortune: “*Per athazir hyleg ad aspectum* of the fortunate and unfortunate planets, you may determine the times in which good or evil will come to the native, the nature of it, or whether it will come at all or not.”<sup>38</sup> For example, if Jupiter is found to be in, say, quartile or oppositional aspect with the hyleg, his influence is uniformly beneficent: “*Per athazir (hyleg per aspectum) Iouis*, you may know that the na-

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tive will have the friendship of kings and potentates and whatever there is to be had of fortune and beauty.”<sup>39</sup> When Mars, one of the infortunes, is in strong aspect with the hyleg, the case of the native is hopeless save for the grace of God: “*Per athazir (hyleg per aspectum) Martis*, you may prognosticate fornications, mariages, love affairs, and friendships; misfortune or injury to women, conflicts, quarrels, and reverses.”<sup>40</sup> In the horoscope of Constance, as we have already seen, Mars is in conjunctional aspect with Luna in the hylegiacal position. This signifies that, in addition to all the other misfortunes which we have predicted above might befall her, she is subject to death unless miraculously protected: “When Luna is the hyleg and the degree of the ascendent in the radix of the nativity is unfortunate and if she is in conjunction with Sol or with one of the infortunes, then the native born at such an unfortunate hour will be in danger of death.”<sup>41</sup> The *athazir hyleg per aspectum Martis* hath slain this marriage and precipitated a flood of misfortunes upon the head of Constance.\*

\* It must be observed that this atazir of the hyleg by reference to the influence of the single planet, Mars, is the least complex imaginable. In a full and complete reckoning of the atazir of the hyleg, the honest astrologer must consider not only the hylegiacal position but also the aspects of *all* other planets, of the tenth house, and of the Place of Fortune. He must observe, moreover, the declinations and relative motions of these planets; their benefic or malefic natures; their situations in good or bad signs; whether their influence is strong or weak, depending upon whether the nativity is diurnal or nocturnal; and whether they are combust, retrograde, or peregrine. He must determine whether the aspects are accurate, or nearly so, and strongly favorable, i.e., semi-sextile, sextile, quintile, trine, and biquintile, or

When the horoscope of Constance is interpreted after this fashion according to the directions of mediaeval astrology, the main incidents of her life as Chaucer lifts them from the chronicle of Trivet are fully explained. This particular addition which the poet has made to the original story is not haphazard and aimless; I believe that it is organic. He is careful to notify the reader at the very beginning of his process of rationalisation that every man's death is written plainly in the heavens:

For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,  
Is writen, got wot, who-so coude it rede,  
The deeth of every man, withouten drede.

It was so in the case of Pompey, Julius, Hercules, and others; the conflict which raged about the city of Thebes was foreshadowed in the stars. The finite minds of men, however, are so dull that they are unable to read the mysterious messages completely or aright. Else men might have known that, even for the Sultan, his marriage with Constance must bring about misfortune and death; in that great book which men call the heavens it was long ago written with stars that love should prove to be his destruction. And so it happens in the story. As for Constance, her marriages are doomed in advance, by the inexorable laws of the stars having power at her birth, to be accompanied by unhappiness; her jour-

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unfavorable, i.e., square, semi-square, sesquiquadrate and opposition. And all of these positions and relative motions must be calculated to the minute and second. Chaucer, being an artist and using astrological material for literary purposes, is not concerned with these technicalities.

neys must be attended by suffering; and the baleful influence of Mars directed against Luna, the hyleg, quite clearly makes her death practically inevitable. That she escapes this pre-ordained fate in the midst of calamities is due to the intervention of the grace of God.

When it is remembered that at the birth of Constance Aries was just rising in the East, no one need be surprised that her life is precarious and beset with dangers which, in the ordinary course of human events, would prove fatal. She is continually being raised to positions of eminence and honor and as often cast down. Her marriage to the Lord of Syria is heralded with pomp; but no sooner has she arrived in the pagan country than the wicked Sultanness begins plotting against the happiness and the very life of the young wife. A great feast is prepared, it will be remembered, at which both pagans and Christians are entertained; there is much reveling — but in the end the Christians and all the pagans who are on the point of betraying their faith are murdered and hewn to pieces. Constance alone escapes the vengeance of the Sultanness, to be set adrift in an open boat, carefully provisioned to be sure, but without sails or rudder. It is only after terrible hardships that she arrives upon the shores of England. This once she has escaped the decrees of the stars. Living a devout life in the new country and winning many souls to Christianity, she is entertained by Alla and Hermengild, his wife, with respect and honor. But she may not remain long in peace. A young knight, having conceived an unholy passion for her and having been repulsed, takes his revenge by murdering Hermengild and placing

the bloody knife in the hand of sleeping Constance. Here again, however, the decree of death pronounced by the stars is averted at the last moment by a sign from heaven.

New honors are later showered upon her in the form of marriage with Alla, and she rejoices afresh in the birth of a child. But Mars, cadent from an angle, powerful in Scorpio, and ruling in oppression over Luna, proves malignant to this marriage also — for a time. Alla's jealous mother, Donegild, by a skilful interchange of letters works the downfall of the young wife, who is torn from her child and again set adrift upon the sea. In the course of her aimless wanderings she is tortured by hunger, threatened with the lust of men, beset round about with pirates, and broken with grief. Indeed, she is the afflicted of fortune. Her marriages, as might have been expected, are accompanied not only by her personal sorrows but also by wars and the struggles of men in arms, by murders and assassinations, and by the misfortunes of whole peoples. Scorpio and the eighth house have taken their toll of the afflicted and the dead; they with Mars have worked destruction.

No one must suppose, however, that in his astrological beliefs Chaucer is an out-and-out fatalist. He is too good a church-man, I suppose, for that.<sup>42</sup> Being doubtless familiar with the most advanced astrological thought of his time, he could scarcely have escaped pondering over the problem of God's relation to the more or less unalterable influence of the stars upon the lives of men. If the laws of astrology are valid and effective, what part does a Supreme Being play in the universe?

The violent controversy over this matter which raged over Europe for centuries during the Middle Ages<sup>43</sup> must have attracted Chaucer's attention to the subject; he must have been intimately acquainted, I think, with the arguments presented by both sides in the great intellectual conflict. Men believed in astrology; they also had faith in God. In most of the independent passages which he has introduced into the *Man of Law's Tale*, the poet is eager, it seems to me, to make his position unmistakably clear: the stars are undoubtedly powerful in directing human affairs, but they are still subject ultimately to the will of God. While he has not slighted the tragedy of the original story, one cannot help noticing that he has apparently attempted to soften it by insisting upon the power of a Christian faith. As we have seen, Constance might have lost her life at several points in the narrative; according to the laws of astrology her death might ordinarily have been predicted with certainty. Chaucer has indeed permitted the stars to afflict her in many ways, in almost any way — short of death; she *must* escape death. So it is in the original version of the story — which he does not feel inclined to change — and so it may be in real life when God stretches forth His hand among the stars. In addition, therefore, to introducing a horoscope for the purpose of explaining the main incidents of the story, Chaucer now sets about creating other independent passages in order to prove the supremacy of a Divine Power over astral influence.

Thanks to the beneficence of the sign Libra in the East at the birth of Constance, she was endowed with a

religious nature and with an insight into religious mysteries; she lives and moves by faith. Why does she alone escape death at the feast given by the Sultanness? It is a miracle, says Chaucer, such as one finds common enough in the pages of Holy Writ and in the legendary lives of the saints.<sup>a</sup> Again, as she is sent out to sea the first time, Constance addresses herself to Christ and submits herself into His hands; it is His power which directs her ship into a safe port.<sup>b</sup> When in despair she is being tried for murder before the court of Alla, alone and without a champion, she remembers that two of God's saints were once similarly oppressed and that by His grace they were rescued;<sup>c</sup> she too is vindicated by the mysterious appearance of an arm from heaven which smites to death her false accuser. And when an impious man comes aboard her ship for the purpose of ravishing her honor, some divine power preserves her chastity; the wicked man falls overboard and is drowned. Nor is this surprising, says Chaucer, for so God gave courage, strength, and protection to David when he went alone against Goliath, and to Judith when she was led to the couch of Holofernes.<sup>d</sup> And the final happiness of Constance, after all her suffering at the hands of a malignant fortune, is presented as a free and pathetic gift of Christ.<sup>e</sup> Chaucer here stands with the best of mediaeval astrologers who recognise, in their darkest prognostications, the fact that certain combinations of stars which

<sup>a</sup> See *C. T.*, B, 470-504. This is Chaucer's addition.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, B, 449-462. Also Chaucer's.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, B, 631-658. Chaucer's interpolation.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, B, 925-945. The Author's comment.

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid.*, B, 1037-1043, 1049-1070. Independent passages.



seem to foretell inevitable death are subject to the intervening and arbitrary hand of God. By emphasising this belief Chaucer has made reasonable not only the escapes all along the way of Constance's life but also her final happiness.

After this manner the artist works, it seems to me, when he wishes to rationalise the ready-made incidents of the Constance story and explain some of the elements of a fixed character. Many things in the life of Constance, which may have puzzled the poet and his readers at first, are made clear by reference to the *athazir hyleg per aspectum Martis* and by an insistence upon the intervening hand of God. And all this is accomplished in the independent passages. I cannot understand, therefore, how Professor Skeat's opinion can be any longer accepted as wise when he says, "All of these insertions are, in fact, digressions, and have nothing to do with the story." While I would not willingly have it inferred from the emphasis which I have placed upon these passages that Chaucer is making his story illustrate the workings of astrological principles, still it does seem to me that, without a horoscope showing the influence of the stars and without the recognition of Divine Power, this life of Constance would possess little more unity than Trivet's version. But as we have it the *Man of Law's Tale* seems to be a whole complete within itself, compact in spite of its apparently straggling and unconnected incidents, excellently motivated, possessed of an unusual — in the Middle Ages — unity of character, and therefore a piece of artistic workmanship.

Such a procedure on Chaucer's part should occasion

no surprise; he is in large measure the product of his time. Professor J. L. Lowes has already observed that the Middle Ages seized upon the great stories of the past and, while preserving a core of vital narrative, translated epic machinery and classical mythology into terms of the commonplaces dear to their own heart. They reset the stage and recostumed the actors. "The mediaeval courtly romances of the period were crowded with the marvellous. And the marvellous had built up its own imposing fabric of conventions. And when Benoit and the unknown writers of other classical romances came to their Latin material, they found there a no less imposing paraphernalia of conventional machinery — the wrath of Juno, the wiles of Venus, the missions of Hermes, the instigations of Pallas Athene. But the gods of Greece and Rome had meantime undergone their *Götterdämmerung*, and the elaborate structure built on their interventions had become to the Middle Ages an empty shell. And so when the epics went over into the romances, for mythology were substituted marvels; in place of the interpositions of the gods appears the world of magic — magic robes, magic swords, magic tents, enchanted castles and chambers, *fées* and monsters. . . . The gods have vanished, and instead the land is 'al fulfilled of fayerye.'" <sup>44</sup> Chaucer is of this age, but also somewhat in advance of it. By the introduction of fairy-lore, for example, he has prepared for the climax of the *Marchant's Tale*, which features blind January's recovery of sight just in time to see May's infidelity with the love-lorn Damian, and the skill with which the young wife persuades her aged cuckold hus-

band that all was done for his benefit. Now in one analogue of this incident the blind man's sight is miraculously restored, and the wife explains that his recovery is due to her contrivance; in another the husband is not blind, but the tree is supposed to be enchanted and to cause illusions. But when Chaucer comes to use the story, he sees that enchanted trees and miraculous recovery of sight are out of place in a satirical narrative. Consequently, he introduces Claudian's Pluto and Proserpina transformed after the manner of *Sir Orfeo* into the King and Queen of Fairyland, and represents them in sympathy respectively with the injured husband and the erring wife. Their quarrel is delightfully human.<sup>45</sup> Pluto, quoting satirical authorities like a mediaeval man of the world, refers to ten hundred thousand stories he could tell which present the untruth and infidelity of women, and resolves to open old January's eyes to young May's harlotry; Proserpina, recking not a butterfly what Pluto's authorities write against women, defends the truth and honor of her sex in general, and determines to give May a fitting answer when she is discovered at fault. And so it happens. May enjoys her lover; January's sight is restored by Pluto in time for him to see — enough; and May is provided with an answer which delights her duped husband and prepares for continued stolen sweets. Thus Chaucer has introduced the popular superstitions of his time, a sort of fairy machinery, in order that the unusual ending of the story may seem motivated and reasonable to his readers. But so far as I know Chaucer is the only mediaeval writer who motivates narrative action by reference to the stars. Still,

since the popular astrology of his age was more scientific and credible than magic, *faerie*, and enchantment of all kinds, I see no reason why he should not have seized upon its principles for the purpose of improving and strengthening the technique of the *Knight's Tale*, the *Legend of Hypermnestra*, and the *Man of Law's Tale*.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## MEDIAEVAL DREAM-LORE

Somnia ne cures; nam fallunt somnia plures

AN attempt to sound Chaucer's knowledge of dream-psychology without an appeal to Freud and other modern writers on the subject of dreams may seem to critics a foolhardy procedure calculated to be accompanied at every turn by failure. And to suggest that Chaucer's classification of the various types of dreams together with his perplexed conjectures regarding their causes may not, possibly, have been based entirely upon Macrobius's commentaries on the *Somnium Scipionis* or upon passages from *Le Roman de la Rose*, and that the framework of his dream-poems was not, perhaps, patterned altogether after the Old French *genre*, may appear to be flying wantonly in the face of long-established and therefore respectable fact. But it is comforting to remember that Chaucer knew less about modern psycho-analytical theory regarding dreams than even the present writer, that in trying to fathom the mysteries of a natural phenomenon in which his interest was great and evidently abiding he would not, likely enough, have confined his researches to the commentaries of one or two writers, and that, though he was first and last a literary man and consequently acquainted with all the prevailing types of literary love-visions, he was also broad-minded enough to give more than a passing notice to mediaeval

dream-lore in its scientific aspect with the idea in mind, doubtless, of employing it in his art. The purpose of this and the succeeding chapter is to classify dreams and visions according to the medical men, natural and other philosophers, and theologians of the Middle Ages, to show how these classes are named or are represented in the writings of Chaucer, and finally to demonstrate, if possible, how the English poet has brought his knowledge of dream-psychology and the philosophy of sleep effectively to bear upon the creation of two characters in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*.<sup>1</sup>

No one must suppose, of course, that Chaucer's charmingly avowed ignorance of dreams and their sources, as put forth in the introduction to the *House of Fame* (1-55), in any way indicates the actual state of his knowledge; his disarming simplicity and confession of inability to understand are merely assumed for literary purposes. He has almost addled his poor wits, it will be remembered, trying to grasp the significance of certain groups and sub-groups, classes and sub-classes, into which dreams have been divided, and attempting to fathom the true causes from which they spring; but for all that, may God turn every dream to good! For by the cross, says he in effect, it is something to be wondered at, according to his way of thinking, what indeed does cause dreams either in the morning or in the evening, and why some are followed by sure results and others are not. In perplexity he observes that one is sometimes called an "avisoun" and another a "revelacioun," this a "dreem" and that a "sweven," still another a "fantom" and some "oracles," but he does



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not understand why; let those who know more about these "miracles" than he does solve the problem. For however busily he may work his mind he is still at a loss to determine the exact significance of the "gendres," or to know the time-lengths which ought to be allotted to the various species, or to comprehend why one thing rather than another should be picked out as the cause. For example, some say that "folkes complexiouns make hem dreme of reflexiouns"; others will have it that dreams originate in a certain feebleness of brain caused by abstinence or sickness or prison experience or by some great distress of spirit, or perhaps in the disorganisation of the natural habits of life by too much study, or by melancholy and its attendant fears, or else by the excessive devotion of some, or by too much contemplation, or maybe by the cruel life which lovers lead, hoping and fearing so much that their "impressiouns" appear in "avisious." Perhaps, too, the good and bad spirits have power to make men dream at night; or else the Human Soul is of such a nature that it foresees and warns men of coming events, only the flesh cannot fully understand because the warning is glimpsed as through a glass darkly. But Chaucer does not know; he will leave the whole matter to the "grete clerkes" who have treated of this and many another thing. It may be remarked in passing that however definite a significance the poet may have attached to most of these terms, he nowhere else indicates a distinction between "dreem" and "sweven"; apparently he uses them indiscriminately in referring to a certain type of vision which comes to men in sleep.

That skeptic, Pandarus, on the other hand, has no such respectful consideration for dreams as has Chaucer; to that dealer in worldly pleasures the whole dream family is not worth a bean! After Criseyde has been carried away to the Grecian camp, it will be recalled, Troilus languishes a sorrowful creature; and when he slumbers, his dreaming mind is disturbed by the most dreadful things that could be imagined. Recognising that his dreams and the shrieking of that fatal bellman, the owl, may foretell his imminent death, he approaches Pandarus with the idea of making a nuncupatory will (*T. C.*, V, 295-320). Whereupon Pandarus laughs to scorn his "swevenes and al swich fantasye" (V, 358-78).<sup>2</sup> Away with them, says the comforter; a straw for the significance of dreams! There is no man living who can interpret them correctly (360-365). Troilus's dream proceeds from nothing but his melancholy. Priests of the temple will tell you that dreams are the "revelaciouns" of the gods, or as likely as not they are nothing but "infernalis illusiouns"; physicians affirm that they proceed from "complexiouns" or from fasting or gluttony (366-374). Who knows which has the right of it? Others say that through "impressiouns" — as when a person has something fast in mind — come "swich avisiouns"; and still others, forming their opinions from certain books, say that men dream dreams of a specific character according to the seasons of the year, and that occasionally "th' effect goth by the mone" (371-77). But, concludes Pandarus, have no faith in any dream; they are all false (378). Without emphasising Pandarus's skepticism, assumed doubtless

upon the spur of the moment in order to comfort Troilus, one must not fail to observe that here are three types of dreams not mentioned in Chaucer's modest catalogue, namely, "infernals illusiouns," those caused by the sundry seasons of the year, and those over which the moon has influence.

Now Macrobius considers only visions that come to men in sleep, of which he names five principal species, namely, *somnium*, *visio*, *oraculum*, *insomnium*, and *phantasma* or *visum*.<sup>3</sup> Of these five the first three contain elements of wisdom because they foretell coming events; the last two are foolish and empty of meaning, unworthy of being interpreted because they contain nothing of prophetic value. As to the meaning of these terms Macrobius does not leave us in doubt, though one might wish that his definitions were more precise or that some of his classifications were less elastic. A dream may be recognised as an *oraculum*, says he, "when in sleep there appears a relative or other sacred person, such as a priest or a priestess, or even a god, who openly announces what is or is not to come, what should be done in specified cases and what should be avoided." It is a *visio* "when events come to pass precisely as they appear to the dreamer"; and that is said to be a *somnium* "which conceals with figures and veils with ambiguity the significance of a thing not capable of being understood except by interpretation; though we cannot explain it as it is, still a man with experience in such matters may reveal to us its hidden meaning." Of the *somnium* there are five kinds, *alienum*, *proprium*, *commune*, *publicum*, and *generale*, to which Chaucer prob-

ably refers when he speaks of the "gendres" but of which he makes no further use.

Species of dreams without significance, *insomnium* and *phantasma*, are more difficult to understand because their limits are less sharply defined. The *insomnium* is described as follows: "Whatever solitudes of an oppressed mind, or derangements of body, or whims of fortune may harass or engage the attention of a man in his waking hours, these assail him when he is asleep: disquiet of mind, as if a lover should recognise himself enjoying or being deprived of his delights, or as if one should seem to fear a person threatening him with plots or force — in either case the dreamer seems to encounter or to escape from the semblances or images of what his waking experience has presented to him; discomforts of body, as if a person drunken with wine or distended with a superabundance of food should imagine himself being suffocated by such repletion or pressed upon by a burden, or, on the other hand, as if a hungry and thirsty man should seem to desire food and drink, to seek it, or even to have found it; whims of fortune, as if one should consider himself advanced in office and dignities or driven out in accordance with his waking desires or fears. Though these and similar things, resulting from a man's condition of mind, may disturb the quiet and repose of the sleeper, they fly away and vanish completely with the passing of sleep." This type is called *insomnium* not because it is experienced in sleep — all the species have that in common — "but because only in sleep is the dream-content believed to be as it seems; upon waking one recognises that it has neither value nor significance."

Of the *phantasma* he says: "The *phantasma* or *visum* in truth comes to a man when he is in a certain, as it were, first mist of sleep, somewhat between waking and complete quiet, and when, on the point of beginning to slumber, he considers himself up to this time fully awake. In this state he seems to see crowding in upon him strangely moving or swimming forms, distorted in appearance and out of all natural proportions in size, or he may experience the rushing in of tumultuously whirling, kaleidoscopically changing things, either delightful or disturbing. In this class is the *ephialtes* (or incubus), which, according to popular belief, takes possession of worried and exceedingly sensitive men in moments of passivity or quiescence and burdens them with its weight. Admitting that these two species of dreams are valueless as aids in acquiring a knowledge of the future, we are still provided with instruction concerning the character and possibilities of divination by the other three." Considering further the relation of mind to body in dreaming and how the clairvoyant power of the spirit is often oppressed and, as it were, dimmed by the flesh, Macrobius remarks: "The soul, however, since in sleep it is slightly freed from participating in the bodily functioning, acquires in the meantime the power of superior insight, though never achieving that sharpness of vision which pierces through the covering of things with an absolutely clear view; it does not see with an unobstructed and direct glance, but through a sort of intervening curtain of misty texture, as it were, which darkens or obscures the sight. Still when the body is quiet in sleep, the introspective soul is able in some measure to pierce

this veil — which, like horn or ivory reduced to the last degree of thinness, is highly translucent but never perfectly transparent — to the truth beyond.”

Critics have seen in these passages from Macrobius the main source of Chaucer’s knowledge of dreams. Ten Brink, indeed, considers that the English poet has given in the *House of Fame* a kind of recapitulation of this whole chapter, translating *visio* into “avisioun,” *phantasma* into “fantom,” *oraculum* once into “revelacioun” and again into “oracle,” and possibly *somnium* into “dreme” and *insomnium* into “sweven,” though these last two English terms are not sharply differentiated.<sup>4</sup> But, as we shall see later, the Chaucerian terminology is scarcely equivalent to the Latin in the manner indicated by Ten Brink. At any rate, Chaucer does find in Macrobius suggestions for many of his remarks on dreams. Here one meets again the disturbances caused by repletion and inanition, by the disorganisation of the natural habits of life through mental worry, or excessive devotion of lovers, or contemplation, and the conception of the mind’s inability to see into the future except with an imperfect vision because of the veil of flesh which obscures the light. But we find nothing in Macrobius corresponding to dreams having their source in complexions of the body, or in natural melancholy, or in the seasons of the year, or in the power of the moon; nothing to indicate that he is acquainted with dreams called “infernals illusiouns” caused by demons, or with “revelaciouns” proceeding from the influence of good spirits, or with that type of waking vision which comes sometimes to saints, called by Chaucer “avisioun,”



or with that direct revelation of God called prophecy. Chaucer may be indebted for some of these ideas to the questionings expressed by the author of *Le Roman de la Rose* concerning whether dreams are caused by "diverses complexions," or according to "divers corages," or "des meurs divers et des aages."

Ou se Diex par tex visions  
Envoie revelacions,  
Ou li malignes esperiz,  
Por metre les gens en pertz (ll. 18708 ff.).

But even so, it will be necessary to consult many other "clerkes," scientists, astrologers, medical men, philosophers, and theologians before the actual dreams recorded by Chaucer can be properly understood and correctly classified. And because scientists are supposed to have superior analytical minds and to possess a clearer style than other men, let us begin with the physicians.

In medical science dream-psychology is inextricably bound up with the philosophy of sleep, which in turn can be explained only by reference to the theory of virtues and complexions. As we have seen already in the discussion of the *Knight's Tale*, the Reasonable Human Soul gets its work done in the body through the mediate functioning of a force called *virtus*. This *virtus* is divided into three general classes: *virtus naturalis*, *virtus spiritualis* or *vitalis*, and *virtus animata* or *animalis*, which, it will be recalled, functions in and through the brain. This *virtus animalis* has two modes of expression, (1) *interior*, having to do with the reason, imagination, and memory, and (2) *exterior*, which

is represented in the *sensus*, or *sensibilia*, and in *motus localis*, or voluntary motion, both of which employ the nerves and muscles as instruments.<sup>5</sup> Above the *virtus naturalis* is the *virtus animalis* which controls, by direction of the sense-activities and through voluntary motion, the judicious heating and cooling of the balanced humours in the body. Now, psychologically considered, sleep is nothing more than the withdrawal of the *virtus animalis* from its instruments — i.e., the senses and the muscles upon which depends voluntary motion — into the inner parts, or the return upon itself, so that the *virtus naturalis* may exercise its proper appetitive, retentive, expulsive, and especially digestive functions for the purpose of recreating natural heat, which has been dissipated in the activities of waking moments. Galen and Avicenna, the great Arabian physician, agree in effect: "Sleep is the return to its place of origin of the *spiritus animalis* from acting upon its sensory and motor instruments, which, being relieved from its operation upon them, are quiet except that the *spiritus naturalis* carries on those activities necessary for the sustenance of life and the rehabilitation of the *spiritus vitalis*. Thus in sleep the *virtus vitalis*, withdrawing into the subliminal depths of the interior, aids in the digestion of food and is created anew; the fatigued *virtus animalis* rests during the unconscious period; and the *virtus naturalis* is strengthened in the exercise of its natural functions."<sup>6</sup> Regarding the immediate cause of sleep, Avicenna further remarks: "The material cause is a sort of vapor, which ascends from the lower members to the brain. This vapor is an exhalation from digesting foods

and from the bodily humours; when it reaches the limits of its ascent, it is rendered more dense or less volatile by the coldness of the brain and receives an added heaviness from other humidities";<sup>7</sup> and upon the necessity for sleep: "Sleep always follows the derangement of a moist complexion, or the cooling and stiffening of the *sensibilia* by loss of natural heat, or the vehement dissipation of the *spiritus animalis* in strenuous exercise or its withdrawal into itself while food taken into the body is being digested. Therefore, you may find the necessity for sleep in the restoration of the released virtue, the digestion of consumed food, and in the rekindling or regeneration of the tired out body."<sup>8</sup> It is doubtless to this technical relation between natural sleep and digestion that Chaucer refers when, in the *Squire's Tale* (C. T., F, 374), he speaks of "The norice of digestion, the slepe."

Since there is such a delicate adjustment between the activities of the *virtus animalis* and the *virtus naturalis*, physicians cannot afford to be ignorant of dreams and their ways, for, says Galen, "A dream indicates to us the condition of the body."<sup>9</sup> It is quite apparent that any disturbance in the normal balance existing in a healthy person among the bodily humours, blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy, is straightway registered in the mind in the form of dreams; any mental upheaval is recorded in the Imagination, and the impressions of it are reproduced in sleep; and when the mind is quiet, placid, and normally healthy, spirits are said to have the power of mirroring upon it the images of coming events. A dream may be defined, in brief, as a sleep-experience

caused by a disturbance in the Imagination; or better, it is a sort of phantasm originating in the movement of sense-images, or figures, or *simulacra* in the Imagination of the dreamer.<sup>10</sup> One of the most curious facts about a dream is that, in the process of its unfolding, the sleeping man rests under the illusion that he is feeling the actual response of his senses to certain external stimuli, whereas in reality, as we have seen, the *virtus animalis* has withdrawn from its instruments leaving them completely quiescent. The explanation of this phenomenon is not far to seek; the order of movements necessary in the progress of a dream is simply the reverse of that by which sensations are received and conveyed to the brain. When a man is awake, he receives impressions of the outside world through the *sensus*; the *virtus animalis* conveys these *sensibilia* along the nerves into a kind of mental storehouse of sense-impressions, called the *sensus communis*; and these *sensiteria* move the Imagination, so that the man is able to form or apprehend a definite image of what his senses have experienced. In sleep, on the other hand, the Imagination is disturbed — perhaps by the after-effects of worry, or by the influence of planetary intelligences, or by the occult energy of good and evil spirits — and moves upon the *sensus communis*; the *sensiteria* act along the nerves and move the particular senses; and the sense-experience following seems to the dreamer as real as if he were awake, though there is actually no external stimulus. It is quite apparent, therefore, that there can be no dream without images or figures or *simulacra*. At least, so says “myn autour,” Vincent de Beauvais.<sup>11</sup> It is to this necessary characteristic of

dreams that Chaucer doubtless refers when (*House of Fame*, 47) he speaks of the future's being revealed "by figures." We shall see anon, however, that prophecy is a direct revelation from God without intermediary sensory images.

Be that as it may, after careful and scientific study physicians have classified *somnia* according to their causes into three general types, namely, the *somnium naturale*, *somnium animale*, and *somnium coeleste* or *divina*.<sup>12</sup> Petrus de Abano calls the first a *somnium naturale* because "it originates in the dominion of bodily complexions and humours"; the second a *somnium animale* because it "springs from the great anxiety and perturbation of the waking mind"; and the third a *somnium coeleste* because "it is brought to pass through impressions made by those celestial minds or intelligences which are said to direct the heavenly bodies in their courses, since they are able to stamp their figures or influences upon the Imagination in accordance with their natures and in proportion to the aptitude or fitness of our minds to receive them; for the human mind is, in its essence and action, far more nearly akin to angelic substances than to bodily sensations."<sup>13</sup> The cause of a dream having been determined, therefore, it is comparatively easy to arrive at some definite conclusion regarding its validity as a harbinger of future events. It may be affirmed with perfect confidence that the *somnium naturale* in what it seems to presage is always and utterly false, and that the *somnium coeleste* is never without some significance which the celestial intelligences wish to impress upon the mind of the sleeper; and even this lat-

ter is more credible in the mornings, because at that time the mind, being calm and unoppressed by the humours or by repletions of the body, is in its fittest condition to receive a clear image of the divine impression. And the *somnium animale* "seems to have very little significance, or none at all; it is for the most part an illusion."<sup>14</sup> So the medical men would classify dreams according to their causes and in the light of truth. But since it is palpably impossible to determine with any degree of certainty or accuracy what these causes are in any given instance, dream-psychology cannot be called an exact science; not being subject to practical experiment, it must be classed along with ethics. Still, your observant physician may often find a consideration of dreams helpful in the diagnosis of specific maladies.

There are always to be found certain skeptics like Pandarus, however, who would deny the prophetic import of dreams altogether. But, says Averroes, "To those men who deny the significance of the dream and maintain that it comes merely by chance, I would say that perhaps it is sent for a purpose; all dreams seem to be fallacious only because these ignoramuses cannot distinguish between the false and the true. But to deny dreams, especially clearly authenticated dreams, is to deny consciousness; there is no man living who has not at some time or other experienced a dream which has announced to him something of the future."<sup>15</sup> Still, in the case of Troilus's dream, Pandarus is warranted in scouting the idea of its having any reference to coming events; it is a *somnium naturale* proceeding from melancholia, as Pandarus points out (*T. C.*, V, 360). Some-



times it seems to Troilus asleep that he is alone in some horrible place; sometimes he is fighting with his enemies and falls into their hands; and again he seems to be pitching from some high place into the depths below. Starting out of his slumber, he feels a quaking dread about his heart and his body trembles with fear (V, 250 ff.). This is not even a respectable *somnium animale*, however much the mind of Troilus may have been disturbed over the going of Criseyde. In this case he is merely oppressed by the fumes rising from too much melancholy in the blood; he is experiencing a *phantasma*, or having a nightmare, or being shaken to fear by an incubus, which — as St. Augustine comments upon the *phantasma* of Macrobius — “is nothing more nor less than a sort of fumosity arising from the stomach or heart to the brain and there burdening the mind.”<sup>16</sup> It may be observed that such a dream is sometimes popularly interpreted in the Middle Ages as the appearance of demons in sleep, hence Chaucer’s prayer to be delivered “Fro fantom and illusioun” (*Fame*, 493), i.e., from horrible apparitions which demons show to sleeping men and from the deceptions which they may practise upon the waking mind. And it is to this idea, widely current in Chaucer’s day, of demons’ ability to assume human forms and lie with mortal women in sleep that the Wife of Bath refers when she speaks of a certain limitour’s being the only “incubus” in the countryside (*C. T.*, D, 880).

Among reputable astrologers we find Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel dividing dreams into three classes: the first is a “vision sent by the All-High God,” the second

is occasioned by planetary influences, and the third proceeds from the humours of the body. He is entirely orthodox in his belief that divine revelations are to be accepted at their face value; and he is equally convinced that dreams caused by humours of the body have no significance whatever. Visions having astral influences as their sources, however, are of two kinds, the false and the true, their vanity or trustworthiness depending upon the power, positions, applications, and aspects of the planets at the time when the vision occurs.<sup>17</sup> He observes further that Sol and Luna must be especially considered in interpreting visions of this class, because "Sol is said to be influential in producing waking visions and Luna in causing dreams in sleep." He then proceeds to illustrate how Luna, variously aspected and posited, is strong in determining whether a dream is false or true, good or bad in its implication. "You must observe among other things," says he in effect, "the position of Luna, especially whether she is discovered in the third or ninth House of the astrological figure. If she be not there, but posited in the ascendent or in any one of the angles, not conjoined with but otherwise aspecting one of the fortunate planets, then this configuration indicates that the vision will be good or pleasant, of beneficent import, and prophetic of happy circumstances to come. If she be not conjoined with but otherwise aspecting an unfortunate planet, the vision will be terrifying and evil in its signification; if she be in conjunction with one of the infortunes, the vision will be pleasing and beautiful but in its purport baneful. But if Luna be aspected by beneficent planets and free from wicked influences,

then the vision will be repulsive and foul but of happy signification.”<sup>18</sup> It is to this power of Luna that Pandarus doubtless refers when he informs Troilus that in some dreams “th’ effect goth by the mone” (*T. C.*, V, 377).

After outlining seven grades of visions ordered according to their relative truth from the lowest, those caused by the complexions, to the highest, prophecy, Arnoldus de Villa Nova classifies them all under two general heads, *natura* and *doctrina*. Natural dreams are those produced by forces which affect the Imagination through the bodily *sensibilia*, such as, for example, the complexions, blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy, repletion and poor digestion, hunger, nervousness and fear following upon distracting physical and mental experiences. Dreams are also caused by reactions of the body to its environment and by its adaptation to climatic conditions and the various seasons of the year, to the mild temperature of spring and autumn, the heat of summer, and the cold of winter. No such dream presages anything concerning the future.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to observe how well Arnoldus is supported, in his remarks concerning the influence of seasons upon visions, by Vincent de Beauvais: “Dreams are diversified by the position of the body and in accordance with the seasons; in spring and autumn they are particularly confused, disordered, and false.”<sup>20</sup> Here again Pandarus seems to be correct when he informs Troilus that “after tymes of the yeer by kynde, men dreme” (*T. C.*, V, 376), maintaining that all such are meaningless. But to return to the *doctrina* of Arnoldus. Doctrinal dreams are

those resulting from the influences of external forces or intelligences exerted upon the mind free from base imaginings and unoppressed by any passions of the senses. The occult power of planets, signs of the Zodiac, and Houses are to be placed among such influences. Arnoldus explains that questions concerning specific dreams are to be referred for interpretation to the twelve Houses in the figure of a horoscope, and that prognostications of future events may be made by attributing dreams of a certain character to specified and respective parts of the body. For example, a vision concerning family secrets is to be referred to the intestines and for interpretation to the First House. Dreams about gold and blood — the one signifies the other — are to be referred to the liver and for interpretation to the Second House: "The liver is the radix of treasure and of blood; according to the Hindus blood stands for treasure, because frequently on account of gold, or in the acquisition of it, our blood is squandered."<sup>21</sup> Such a question of the Second House might run as follows: "Suppose a person should dream that, on the eve of his departure for a journey into foreign parts beyond the sea, he were being let blood in great quantities by one of his parents or kinsmen. This would indicate that the dreamer will die soon after and that the other will succeed to his properties and estates according to the will of the deceased."<sup>22</sup> It is doubtless of this philosophy "*secundum Indos*" that the Wife of Bath is thinking when she fabricates a dream with which to catch the worthy clerk Jankin. "I told him," she says, "that I dreamed about him all night; that he was about to

slay me, and that my bed was full of blood. And yet I hoped that good would come of it, *For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught* " (C. T., D, 581).

Theologians whom I have consulted are interested primarily in that type of *visio* called revelation, though they all recognise that *somnia* must receive due consideration. St. Augustine reproduces Macrobius's classification almost verbatim, though he adds that the *insomnium* is the result of humours in the blood and the *phantasma* of fumosity arising from the stomach to oppress the mind. When he comes to consider *visiones*, he finds that they are of three genera; namely, the *visio corporale*, which is received through the natural senses of the body and in which the heavens, the earth, and all things therein may be made manifest to the eyes; the *visio spiritale*, which is the result of spiritual forces impressing themselves upon the Imagination in the likeness of sense-images; and the *visio intellectuale*, in which divine mysteries, having neither form nor fashion nor any relation to corporeal images, are directly and intuitively discerned by the Intellect.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the *corporale* is a vision received through the sense of sight while the beholder is wide awake and conscious of the *sensibilia*; the *spiritale*, on the other hand, is a *visio* perceived by the Imagination only when the *sensibilia* are quiescent, perhaps in normal sleep or when the body rests from its passions in a kind of trance deeper than sleep but short of death, so that the Imagination receives the divine impression clothed in sensory imagery; and the *intellectuale* is a vision in which the Intellect, quite apart from the Imagination, where images are recorded and reproduced,

apperceives immediately and intuitively, without thought or imagery, the secrets of divinity.<sup>24</sup> All of them are revelations, but the last two are more absolutely true and significant because they are not subject to the circumstances which affect actual sense-experiences. Now from another point of view, as Vincent de Beauvais explains, these revelations may be divided into two classes: one which is received by the direct apperception of Divine Will, and another which involves phantasms or *simulacra*.<sup>25</sup> The first — Augustine's *intellectuale* — is called *prophecy*; the second — comprising Augustine's *corporale* and *spiritale* — is called a *revelation*. Again, since revelations represent the impressions made by external intelligences upon the Imagination through the aid of images, it must be quite apparent that there are two species of revelation corresponding to the influences exerted by good and bad spirits. When demons are responsible for a vision of this sort, it is called an *illusion*; when through the instrumentality of angels or other good spirits the vision is created in the Imagination of either a waking or a sleeping person, one may call it simply a *revelation*; and when the vision comes to a man in a trance, then it is called *ecstasy*.<sup>26</sup>

Though Chaucer is intensely interested in the scientific aspect of dreams as expounded by medical men and philosophers, it must not be forgotten that he also considers the theologians' presentation of the occult and supernatural. Following the hagiologist's account,<sup>27</sup> he records Valerian's waking vision of an old man clothed in white and holding in his hand a book with golden letters (*C. T.*, G, 200 ff.), and of the angel with two



crowns of roses and lilies (G, 225 ff.). The Monk reproduces Belshazzar's vision of an armless hand writing on the wall (*C. T.*, B, 3392), and the Man of Law relates how a mysterious fist from the air smote the enemies of Constance (B, 669 ff.). And the Summoner tells of an untidy vision which a certain friar had while visiting the realms of Satan (*C. T.*, D, 1670 ff.). But it is that delightfully garrulous and versatile Friar in the *Summoner's Tale* who seems to be most intimately acquainted with the ways of revelation (*C. T.*, D, 1835 ff.). He has just come for a little visit to Thomas, it will be remembered, when the good housewife enters to see whether he will have anything to eat (1835). No, he will have nothing, or at least not much — just the liver of a capon, a piece of soft bread, and the head of a roasted pig (1839 ff.); he has been so busy about vigils and penances that his stomach is destroyed; and, besides, his spirit has its fostering only in the Bible (1845). It is only after the good woman has informed him of her child's death within these two weeks that he launches into his discussion of revelations and to whom they are made. "Yes," says he without surprise or hesitation, "yes, I saw his death by revelation at home in our dormitory. It was, I dare say, just about half an hour after his death that our sacristan and he who has charge of the infirmary — both true friars for fifty years — and I saw him in our 'avisioun' carried to bliss. We arose with many tears trickling down our cheeks and, thanking Christ for having vouchsafed us this revelation, sang the *Te Deum*. We mendicants know more about the mysteries of Christ than common

people; for, you must understand, we live in poverty and abstinence, wedded to fastings and prayers, continence, charity, humbleness, and service, giving ourselves to persecution for righteousness' sake, to weeping, and to cleanness of life, while they live in luxury and in the richness of worldly pleasures. He who expects to have his prayers answered effectually and to be admitted by revelation into God's secrets must fast and be clean, fatten his soul and make his body lean" (1845-1909). Then before his hearers have an opportunity to express their surprise over the wonderful "avisoun" or "revelacioun," he proceeds to classify his own mode of living and the resultant divine experience along with those of the prophets, Moses and Elias (1885-90). Surely this Friar has been reading in the works of theologians, hagiologists, and philosophers, though he is exceedingly presumptuous in ranging himself alongside Moses, the single perfect prophet who, as it were, saw God face to face.<sup>28</sup>

Still he is correct when he postulates as the necessary conditions for the reception of divine revelations a chaste body, a clean mind, and a pure heart. Cornelius Agrippa says: "When a man wishes to receive a celestial vision, his body should be well disposed, his brain unoppressed by fumes or vapor, and his mind free from perturbation; he should abstain from eating and from drinking inebriating draughts; his bedchamber should be cleanly and neat, hallowed and consecrated, and perfumed with incense; his Imagination should be submitted to impressions from celestial intelligences; with the sacred Scriptures before him, he should call upon

the name of God with prayer and supplication, and his thoughts should be fixed intently upon that which he desires. If he does this, he will be visited by a revelation of the highest import and have his mind illuminated by truth." <sup>29</sup> Since it appears that the mind is purged by cleanliness, abstinence, penitence, and alms-giving, one might credit such a revelation as the worthy Friar *says* he had when preceded by the regimen of plain living and high thinking which he outlines. But in this particular case, one cannot forget the pig's head and the capon's liver! Chaucer is here having reported a vision or revelation with an exposition of the conditions which make such an experience possible, but he is not interested in the "avisioun" for itself alone as are the theologians. Being an artist, he here makes use of the occult mysteries of sacred revelation in creating the personality and character of the Friar.

This rapid and necessarily incomplete survey of mediaeval thought upon dreams, their origin, classification, and significance, reveals the astonishing fact that among philosophers, astrologers, medical men, and theologians there are neither essential differences of opinion nor grounds for controversy. There is only a variety of emphasis. Medical men, naturally enough, are interested primarily in the *somnium naturale* to which they attach significance only as an indication of bodily disturbances, but they are perfectly willing to grant the validity and truth of the *somnium coeleste* and to a small degree of the *somnium animale*; philosophers and astronomers are principally concerned with the psychology of the *somnium animale*, but they readily agree

that dreams arising from natural causes are meaningless and that revelations from good spirits are absolutely trustworthy; and theologians, accepting the conclusions of others regarding the *somnium naturale* and the *somnium animale*, devote their attention to the classification and explanation of divinely inspired visions — oracles, revelations, prophecy, ecstasy — which all men claim to be true heralds of coming events. I cannot imagine Chaucer's having been ignorant of these universally accepted conclusions; he might have had access to most of the authors whom I have cited, any one of whom — Vincent de Beauvais, for example — might have given him the general trend of opinion. But it is Chaucer, the man of philosophical mind, who is quick to see the practical and almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of determining precisely the nature of any present dream that has not already been proved true or false by the event. With the vision of last night upon the table, how is one to know whether it is merely a *somnium naturale*, or a *somnium animale*, or a revelation, or an illusion, or a phantom? Here might be grounds for disagreement. And it is Chaucer, the artist, who proceeds to embody in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* such a controversy over the source of a specific dream and to evolve out of it the characters of Chauntecleer and Pertelote.

## CHAPTER NINE

CHAUNTECLEER AND PERTELOTE  
ON DREAMS

AN attentive observer of that dispute which arises, in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, between those tantalisingly human barnyard fowls, Chauntecleer and Pertelote, over the large question of dream-origins, is made to feel that their divergence of opinion grows out of a difference in natural temperament. The controversy is precipitated, it will be recalled, by the necessity of determining to what particular class of dreams the cock's fearful experience of last night belongs before an interpretation of its content can be made. The fair "damoysele Pertelote," however courteous, debonair, and companionable she may be, is by nature practical of mind and unimaginative; from the top of her coral comb to the tips of her little azure toes she is a scientist, who has peered into many strange corners of medical lore. That egotist, Chauntecleer, imaginative and pompously self-conscious, would like to pass as a philosopher and a deep student of the occult. As might be expected, when they come to classify a particular dream, each does it in accordance with his temperamental and characteristic way of looking at things. And with the perversity of human disputants — I had almost said of some husbands and wives in disagreement — each presents only one aspect of the question, that which appeals to him

and with which congenial study has made him most familiar, and ignores practically all other facts which he may know to be true. Pertelote's contentions are well founded when the dream is a *somnium naturale*; Chauntecleer's claims are undeniable when the vision is a true *somnium coeleste*.

Well, as Chauntecleer sits upon his perch one morning with his wives about him, he begins suddenly to groan in his throat as one who is sorely oppressed by some horrible dream. When Pertelote hears him roar, she is aghast. "O dear heart," says she, "what ails you to groan in this manner? For shame, what a sleeper!" And poor Chauntecleer, at last awake and free from his dream, replies: "By God, madam, I dreamed just now that I was in such trouble that my heart is still terribly frightened. May God interpret my dream aright and keep my body out of prison! It seemed to me that, as I roamed up and down in our yard, I saw a fearful beast something like a dog that attempted to accomplish my death. His color was between yellow and red; his tail and both his ears were tipped with black; his snout was small, and he had two glowing eyes. Because of his aspect I am still almost dead with fright. And this, doubtless, was the cause of my groaning." Pertelote, in some measure the mediaeval woman, is grievously disappointed at this pitiful spectacle of a strong and, to her, heroic cock torn by so base a thing as fear. "Alas and wellaway," she cries, "fie upon you, chicken-hearted! Now have you lost all my heart and all my love; I cannot love a coward, by my faith. For whatever women may say, we



all admire and desire husbands who are hardy, wise, and brave, neither a boaster nor one who is afraid of every little thing. How dare you say in the presence of your love that anything can cause you to fear! Have you, who wear a beard, no man's heart? And worst of all, can you be afraid of a mere dream, which is nothing but vanity?

Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,  
And oft of fume, and of complecciouns,  
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.  
Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-night,  
Cometh of the grete superfluitee  
Of youre rede *colera*, pardee,  
Which causeth folk to dreden in here dremes  
Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,  
Of grete bestes, that they wol hem byte,  
Of contek, and of whelpes grete and lyte;  
Right as the humour of malencolye  
Causeth ful many a man, in sleep, to crye,  
For fere of blake beres, or boles blake,  
Or elles, blake develes wole hem take.  
Of othere humours coude I telle also,  
That werken many a man in sleep ful wo;  
But I wol passe as lightly as I can.

Then quoting the saying from Cato, *somnia ne cures* — being careful not to mention the other half of what must have been a proverb, *nam fallunt somnia plures* — she advises him to take certain laxatives lest he come down with a tertian fever (*C. T.*, B, 4100–4125).

From all indications it might appear that Pertelote's diagnosis of Chauntecleer's case is about correct; and

certainly her presentation of the effects of red and black choler upon the dreaming mind is without fault. It will be seen that she seizes upon the cock's intense fear as a sign of a superabundance of humours in the blood, and in this conclusion she is supported by the best medical opinion. Avicenna, for example, remarks upon the infallible symptoms of melancholia: "The principal signs of melancholia in the blood are these: fear without cause, swiftness to anger, and trembling; when the humour is strongly established, dread, defective judgment, uneasiness of mind, a kind of apprehension on account of things which are or are not, and for the most part anxiety over that which is not ordinarily feared. Some live in apprehension of robbers, some fear that the earth will open and swallow them, and others that wolves may break in upon them. Sometimes they are terrified at that which comes within the sphere of their activity; at other times they imagine themselves being crowned kings, or transformed into wolves, or into demons, or birds, or even into artificial instruments or implements."<sup>1</sup>

Chauntecleer's physical condition has not brought him quite to this sad pass, to be sure, but his fears and his dream of a frightful beast are strongly indicative of maladjustment of humours in his system. Up until the moment when his dream is shown by the final outcome to be a prophetic vision, one is inclined to agree with Pertelote's diagnosis, especially so since she is amply supported by the best medical and other authority in her association of Chauntecleer's type of dream with the various complexions. According to Avicenna, for example,

one sign of too much choler is a "dream in which one sees fires, and yellow banners, many other things yellow which are not naturally so, the fervent heat of the bath, or of the sun, and such like," and of *cholera nigra*, "dreams in which terror is produced from the darkness, by tortures, and by the appearance of black things."<sup>2</sup> He is supported by Galen, who declares: "If anyone should see a fire in his dreams, he is troubled by too much yellow bile; if he should see smoke, or a misty darkness, or profound shadows, then by black bile";<sup>3</sup> Rhazes is of the opinion that "when anyone frequently sees fires and lightning and strife in his dreams, red cholera abounds in the blood, but when he beholds many things tinged with a swarthy color and when he experiences terror and fear, these things signify the working of black cholera";<sup>4</sup> Arnoldus de Villa Nova agrees that "if much red cholera is in the blood, one will dream of fires, falling stars, and the flashing of lightning; but excessive black cholera causes dreams in which appear terrible monsters, apparitions, incubi, and such";<sup>5</sup> Albohazen Haly affirms likewise that the choleric man dreams of fires, and the melancholic man of dark places and that he is being suffocated or oppressed by nightmares;<sup>6</sup> and Petrus de Abano associates red cholera with visions of "red, fiery things, flights, disputes, madness," and black cholera with dreams of "black terrifying appearances, lamentations, misfortunes, places of death, and such like."<sup>7</sup> The enthusiastic Pertelote knows many more wonders about the effects of humours upon dreams—such as, for example, no doubt, that a super-abundance of blood produces "dreams in which a man beholds

red objects, or much blood flowing from his body, or seems to be swimming in blood," and that excessive phlegm causes "dreams in which are seen water, rivers, snow and rain, and cold weather" <sup>8</sup> — but she will let that pass (4127 ff.). She must hasten on to prescribe a remedy for the malady which she has diagnosed with apparent accuracy and in much detail.

Chauntecleer's affection as indicated by his fear and the dream must be rigorously attacked before it has had time to develop into something more dangerous; and Pertelote's proposed method of procedure is worthy of the wisest medical men. This busy little housewife, in real concern for the health of her lord and husband — and perhaps eager to show him that, for once, in spite of her femininity she is not so ignorant and incapable as might be supposed — counsels that forthwith and immediately steps be taken to purge this choler and melancholy (431-436). Because there is no apothecary in that town, she herself will teach him the properties of all the herbs in their yard which are by nature useful in purging humours, both above and below. "Beware," she warns, "that the sun in his ascension does not find you still replete with hot humours — you are very choleric of complexion — lest you be afflicted with a tertian fever or an ague, which may prove your destruction." For a day or two at first he shall have digestives of worms before he takes his laxatives of *laurus*, *centauria*, *fumaria*, *elleborus*, *euphorbium*, *rhamus*, and *hedera helix*. He must

Pekke hem up right as they growe, and ete hem in.  
(C. T., B, 4140-57.)

Evidently Pertelote has been reading after the physicians. They all understand that it is not safe to administer purgatives or laxatives for hot humours until after "digestives," i.e., medicines for absorbing or dissipating melancholy and choler, have been given for some time. Richard Saunders, in *The Astrological Judgment and Practice of Physic*, requires several pages upon which to record the best digestives of these humours — though, of course, he has nothing to say about "digestyves of wormes"! And the little hen is wise in her selection of simples. Dioscorides — Chaucer's "Deiscorides" (*C. T.*, A, 430) — says of *laurus nobilis* ("lauriol") that "when taken in water it sits heavy on the stomach and incites vomiting"; of *centauria*, "It expels bilious and heavy humours through the bowels"; of *fumaria* or *fumus terre* ("fumetere"), "This herb consumed in food induces bilious urine"; of black *elleborus* ("ellebor"), "It purges through the lower tracts both phlegm and choleric humours, when given by itself or with scarmonia; it is good for epileptics, mad men, and for those afflicted with melancholia and nervousness"; of *euphorbium* ("catapuce"), "It is a continuous irritant having power to dissipate the suffusion of noxious humours"; of *rhamus* ("gaytres beryis"), "When placed in the doors and windows the branches of this herb are said to repel the evil influences of magicians"; and of *hedera helix* ("erbe yve"), "All species of ivy are acrid, astringent, and particularly effective in cases of nervousness."<sup>9</sup> Surely after Chauntecleer has taken any small part of this prescription to purge him above and below, he will be in

dire need of the *hedera helix*. But it is only by such an heroic course of action that fevers and agues may be avoided.

Pertelote is, moreover, quite right again when she informs her dear husband that the corruption of red and black choler in the blood causes intermittent fevers and rigors. Having decided that red choler especially is at the bottom of Chauntecleer's trouble (4118), she arrives at the logical and scientific conclusion that his fever will be tertian. Avicenna would pronounce her deductions correct. He observes that there are in general two species of fevers, *febres aegritudines* and *febres accidentes*, with the latter of which he would identify the *febris putredinis*.<sup>10</sup> (We are not concerned with the *febris apostematis*, which is also classified under *accidentis*.) Now this *febris putredinis* is so named because it results from a corruption of the four humours of the body, giving rise, in consequence, to four different kinds of fevers, namely, *tertiana*, *quartana*, *quotidiana*, and *continua* (which must not be confused with the *febres accidentes*, all continuous). "The corruption of cholera produces the *tertiana*; the corruption of melancholia, the *quartana*; of phlegm, the *quotidiana*; and the corruption of blood, the *continua*."<sup>11</sup> Of these we are interested only in the *tertiana*, which may be the result of *cholera pura* or *non pura*, i.e., unmixed or mixed with other humours. Of the *tertiana* type, therefore, there are at least three kinds, *tertiana continua*, *tertiana periodica*, and *causon* (or *febris ardens*).<sup>12</sup> The *periodica*, being the result of corrupted *cholera pura*, is mild and easily controlled; but the other two, since before the patient



can recover from one attack another paroxysm is upon him, are more violent and usually accompanied by agues. It is possibly to one of these that Pertelote refers, most likely to the *causon*, because as we have seen in Chauntecleer's case red choler is supposed to be mixed with black choler, or melancholia. Avicenna describes the symptoms of an attack: "A paroxysm of tertian fever begins with a kind of goose-flesh sensation as if the skin were being pricked with the point of a hot needle; then a sudden chill descends upon the patient attended by rigors, each one of which becomes harder than that before. And during the first three days of the fever's course these rigors are strongest and most vehement."<sup>13</sup> One may expect the progress of the malady to run as follows: "First there is felt the prickling sensation mentioned above, then the chill and the rigor; afterwards the rigor moderates and the chill abates, and fever begins; this state continues for awhile; and after that the fever gradually diminishes until it disappears altogether."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, if Chauntecleer's dream were caused by the corruption of red and black choler in the blood — and Pertelote seems to have made out an excellent case — it would be foolish for him to carry his hot humours into the sunshine.

Against Pertelote's presentation of scientifically accurate facts and sound medical theory, Chauntecleer has nothing to oppose but his colossal conceit and a few stories gleaned from old authorities. His manly self-love must have writhed under the lash of his little wife's outspoken contempt for his fears at so paltry a thing as a dream caused by choler. Still, assuming a lordly air of con-

descension — as no doubt befits a husband when confronted by unanswerable arguments — the cock proceeds to shift the basis of the discussion from fact to authority. “Madam,” says he, “I have great respect for your knowledge. But as for this Cato with his *somnia ne cures*, let me inform you that many men of vastly more authority than ever Cato was have held the reverse of his opinion and have found by experience that dreams are significant as presagers of future joy and tribulation.” (4160–70).

Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;  
The verray preve sheweth it in dede (4172).

As a matter of fact, never having thought independently for himself, Chauntecleer has no conception of what rightly constitutes a proof. For all his show of scholarly learning and for all his evident desire to pass as a widely read and deep student of the occult, he has never investigated the philosophy or the psychology of dreams. His puerile mind is capable of grasping only the thread of a marvellous story, trusting blindly and with childlike simplicity to the correctness of interpretations offered by authorities. He impresses his audience with the narration of two stories from “oon of the gretteste auctours that men rede” — being careful not to mention Cicero as the author, probably because he does not know — in which certain events perceived in dreams come true precisely as visualised in sleep (4175–4294). He is copious in detail and points with pedantic pride to the exact book and chapter where one of the stories may be found, but he has no way of determining whether such dreams —

which belong to the type *somnium animale* — are to be considered more credible than the true revelations which he mentions later. With blithe unconsciousness of any fundamental difference, he lumps them all together. He has read and enjoyed immensely the fulfilled “avisoun” of St. Kenelm — he was the son of Kenulphus, King of Mercia, be it known! — and in the Old Testament the dream of Daniel (4319) and of Joseph (4320) and of the King of Egypt (4323), all of which proved to be significant. He recalls that Croesus — who was the King of Lydia — was warned in a dream that he should be hanged (4328), and that Andromache — she was Hector’s wife — saw in a vision precisely how her husband should be slain at the hands of Achilles (4330). The testimony of Macrobius as to the validity of dreams is presented (4314), though complete silence is observed regarding this same Macrobius’s *insomnium* and *phantasma*. At any rate, before the overwhelmed little hen can speak what may be in her mind — one may suspect that she smiles behind her wing — her erudite husband proceeds to close the argument to his complete satisfaction with a bit of flattery and with the assurance that, since events have followed upon the dreams of these other great men, his own “avisoun” will surely be fulfilled in adversity (4341). Besides, he sets no store by these laxatives; they are venomous and nauseous; he defies the whole prescription (4345).

It is entirely characteristic of Chauntecleer to classify his dream as an “avisoun.” Common, ordinary men may experience such dreams as the *somnium naturale*, or the *insomnium* or the *phantasma*, but most of the ful-

filled dreams recorded by the authorities have been authentic *visiones*, or divine revelations granted to famous men, illustrious warriors, mighty kings of nations, prophets, seers. Why should the cock be considered — in his own estimation — less worthy than these to receive an “avisioun”? Still, the fact remains, as Antonius Gaizo observes regarding the dreams recorded by Valerius Maximus, that “those visions which may be called celestial are most rare, and are not granted except to great men. But because such are sometimes significant no one ought, therefore, to identify himself with that class of men who persuade themselves that they should put faith in their own *somnia naturalia* or *animalia*.”<sup>15</sup> Granting, however, the authenticity of Chauntecleer’s “avisioun,” one need experience no surprise at his impudent disregard of its apparent warning. In the full joy of conscious strength he flies from the beams as usual, thinking no doubt that, though these other great ones might have been controlled by the fate revealed in dreams, one so powerful and favored as he is may surely escape. That is Chauntecleer!

Evidently the mind of this self-satisfied personage has never attacked the problem of “necessity” in its relation to foreknowledge as revealed in the *somnium coeleste*. Consequently, since the cock has made so poor a showing as a philosopher and theologian, the Nun’s Priest feels called upon to broach the subject at least in direct connection with Chauntecleer’s “avisioun.” “Alas,” says he in mock-heroic vein,

O Chauntecleer, accursed be that morwe  
That thou into the yerd flough fro the bemes!  
Thou were ful wel y-warned by thy dremes,

That thilke day was perilous to thee,  
But what god forwoot mot nedes be,  
After the opinioun of certeyn clerkis.

(C. T., B, 4420 ff.).

He cannot settle the question, upon which there has been altercation by an hundred thousand men, as to whether God's foreknowledge of coming events constrains a man by "simple necessitee" or whether the power of choice residing in human free-will may alter such constraint into "necessitee condicionel." Happily this writer is also spared the task of solving the problem; Augustine, and Professor Carlton Brown, and Boethius, and Professor J. S. P. Tatlock, and Bishop Bradwardine, and Professor H. R. Patch have already "bulted it to the bren."<sup>16</sup> It may be noted in passing, however, that in showing how Grosseteste solves the general problem of foreknowledge and free-will through the postulation of two kinds of necessity, *antecedentis* ("simple necessitee") and *contingentia* ("necessitee condicionel"), Bradwardine applies the same method to the relation of necessity to foreknowledge as made patent in *revelations*. "In the same way," he concludes, "may be solved the problem of free will in relation to the foreknowledge of the prophet. For the whole question of why these seem to be mutually contradictory, so that they cannot exist at the same time, is none other than that one is contingent and possible whichever way you look at it, and the other is absolutely necessary and seems not to allow of any contingency in that which follows. A thing that is foreknown is possible from any point of view. The foreknowledge of a thing,

when it actually is, cannot be otherwise than it is. Hence it is necessary that knowledge be perfected by that which follows, even though that which is to follow is for the time being contingent. Thus contingent necessity, as has been said, does not seem to permit antecedent necessity, but to contradict it.”<sup>17</sup> One may conclude, therefore, that if Chauntecleer had ever taken the trouble to learn the distinction between simple and conditional necessity and if his mind had been less obsessed with the idea of his own importance, the fulfilment of even so true an “avisoun” as his might have been averted by the mere expedient of remaining upon the beams.

In the *Nun's Priest's Tale* Chaucer has given an excellent demonstration of how the true artist may use scientific and philosophical material in the development of his characters. Nearly half the space compassed by the story is devoted to the controversy over dreams, but by the end of it the reader is fairly well acquainted with Chauntecleer and Pertelote and is ready to accept the ensuing action in which they play their parts. While the discussion is staged, of course, for the sole purpose of developing these characters, still it *seems* as if the divergence of opinion arises naturally out of a fundamental difference in temperament. Hence the reader forgets for the time being that Chaucer is perhaps deliberately manufacturing a situation peopled by creatures of his imagination, and suffers himself to rest under the illusion that he is beholding the expression of personality in action as in real life. And the creation and maintenance of this illusion, I take it, is art.



II

*The Dream-Poems*

Chaucer's dream-poems, the *Parliament of Fowls*, *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, and the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, are, as dreams, perplexing in the extreme. Since most of them were written at a time when the poet's mind was still absorbing poorly assimilated knowledge largely for its own sake and was more or less passively plastic to the multifarious influences that thronged upon him, they seem to lack that discriminating selection of material in the interest of original and direct artistic purposes which characterises his later work. Professor Sypherd has shown that in these poems the form, setting, and devices for heightening interest are determined in some measure by the literary *genre* of the Old French love-vision, but that for all the poet's indebtedness he is by no means a mere imitator.<sup>18</sup> Professor Kittredge observes that Chaucer's predecessors, adopting the fiction of a dream as a literary device for introducing the reader into a kind of fairyland, nowhere attempt to reproduce the actual phenomena of dreams, but that the English poet, on the other hand, while employing the same fiction is also careful that the unfolding of his visions shall be in accordance with real dream-psychology.<sup>19</sup> I should like to suggest — but without any too great conviction — that Chaucer secures this effect through the process of deliberately choosing in composition a specific type of the *somnium* into which his material is to be formed, then indicating in the introduction and elsewhere the

nature of this particular type and the psychology of its manifestations, and finally creating the poem as nearly as possible in accordance with the laws of this psychology. This must not be taken to mean that he is in any way using the story-content of his poem to illustrate the scientific development of a dream; on the contrary, he is employing just enough dream psychology of a specific character to give verisimilitude to the story, in which he is primarily interested. The *somnium naturale*, on account of its evanescent quality, offers but little for exploitation; the *somnium coeleste*, because its sources are entirely occult and its operations highly theoretical, cannot be used except at an obvious disadvantage. But the *somnium animale*, with its complex and readily comprehensible psychology, is just the form upon which the poet may most conveniently build his poem.

Chaucer wishes his reader to understand, I think, that the *Parliament of Fowls* is primarily a *somnium animale*. In the Proem he seems to announce that out of old books, which it is his custom to read with diligence, is about to come something new in the way of dream-lore:

And out of olde bokes, in good feith,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere (24).

On this particular occasion he has picked up a book containing such delightful matter that he peruses it all day long. It is Tullius Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, which tells of how Africanus the Younger saw his father in a marvellous vision and which treats in seven chapters of heaven and earth and of the souls that dwell therein.

Indeed, the volume is so strange that he must give an outline of it (34-85). But the coming of darkness bereaves him of his book for lack of light, and he prepares himself for bed, somewhat discontented, full of thought and "besy hevynesse" (86-91). Exceedingly weary from the day's labor, his spirit takes its rest in sleep. And, behold, in his dream this same Africanus, arrayed precisely as he was when Scipio saw him, comes and stands by his bed's side. What is still more wonderful, Africanus speaks to him: "Thou hast done well in reading my old and tattered book, of which Macrobius thought highly, and now I shall somewhat requite thy labor." Chaucer cannot say whether his having wearied his mind with reading the *Somnium Scipionis* is responsible or not for the vision, but that explanation seems likely enough. For, says he quoting from Claudian,<sup>20</sup>

The wery hunter, slepinge in his bed,  
To wode ayein his minde goth anoon;  
The juge dremeth how his plees ben sped;  
The carter dremeth how his cartes goon;  
The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his foon,  
The seke met he drinketh of the tonne;  
The lover met he hath his lady wonne (99-109).

Yet lest someone should doubt the significance of his *somnium animale*, he proceeds to give it a touch of the *somnium coeleste* by addressing a prayer for help to Venus; for, after all, Venus is ultimately responsible for this love-vision (113-119). But it is Africanus who leads him in the dream before two gates in a park, pushes him through the gateway of the "sweven"

(154), and keeping fast hold of his hand, pilots him through the remainder of the adventure (169). The guide does not appear again and there is very little dream-psychology in the narrative proper, but the realistic setting and the poet's elaboration of the nature of a definite dream-type create that illusion of truth to fact under which the reader's mind rests throughout the succeeding incidents.

Both the *Book of the Duchess* and the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* belong to the same type. They are, however, more artistic than the *Parliament of Fowls* because in them the poet has developed the stories themselves in accordance with psychological laws of the *somnium animale*; they have many characteristics of actual dreams. In the Proem to the *Duchess* Chaucer is so powerfully disturbed in mind by some present sorrow that sleep has forsaken him these many days. "I have great wonder," says he, "how I may live so many days and nights without sleep. My mind is so full of useless thoughts that I care not how the world goes or comes; joy, sorrow, or whatever it may be, all are alike to me, for I have no feeling in anything. And well you know it is against nature to live in this wise, for all earthly creatures cannot endure any long time without sleep. Thus melancholy and the dread I have of dying, sleeplessness, and heaviness of heart have slain that alacrity of spirit I was wont to have. If you ask me whence comes this restlessness, I cannot truly say; but I guess, indeed, that it springs from that sickness I have suffered these eight years — and my healing is never the nearer because there is only one physician who could aid me —

but let that pass!" (1-40). To help drive the night away he picks up an ancient volume and reads the sad story of Seys and Alcione (45-220), in the course of which he learns for the first time of a god who can make men sleep. It is very strange that he has never heard of Morpheus; he had known only one God (230-240). Still lest he die, he playfully promises to this Morpheus, or to his goddess Juno — or to anybody else who can give him rest — the best feather-bed imaginable if only his prayer for sleep may be granted. Immediately such a drowsiness takes hold upon him that presently he falls upon his book asleep. The dream which comes to him is so wonderful and sweet that no man has the wit to read it aright; not even Joseph, who explained Pharaoh's dreams, nor Macrobius, who wrote all the "avisioun" of Africanus, could have interpreted this marvellous "sweven" (270-290). Here Chaucer is indicating that the dream-content which follows grows in large measure out of his conscious perturbation of spirit and sorrow of heart. As Professor Tupper remarks, "The stimuli of the dream in the *Book of the Duchess* were not only such explicit causes as the poet's melancholy and the Ovidian tale of bereavement, but a graver implicit reason, the 'rooted sorrow' of Blanche's death which fills all his recent memory."<sup>21</sup> And Professor Kittredge has already shown with admirable skill how well the psychology of actual dreams is exemplified throughout the story,<sup>22</sup> adding, however, that the "child-like Dreamer, who never reasons, but only feels and gets impressions, who never knows what anything means until he is told in the plainest language is not Geoffrey

Chaucer, the humorist and man of the world. He is a creature of the imagination.”<sup>23</sup> Likewise in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer’s sensory impressions which come to him in the daisied fields are in some sort reproduced in the dream which follows. Professor Tupper, finding that “men have failed to read aright the *Legend* Prologue because they have overlooked the close relation of the phantasies of the vision to their exciting sources,” presents an excellent study upon the subject, the purpose of which is to “trace the translation of the waking thoughts of the poet’s day into the picture writing of the next night, to examine the speedy conversion of the actual ideas, latent dream-material, into dream-content.”<sup>24</sup>

Chaucer’s *House of Fame*, on the other hand, is a pure *somnium coeleste*. After a discussion of dreams in general — which we have reviewed already — he tells how on the tenth of December there came to him the most wonderful vision surely that man ever had. It is the only one of the dream-poems worthy to take rank along with the “avisioun” of Chauntecleer or with that of Croesus (105) and other great receivers of revelations:

Now herkeneth, every maner man,  
That English understonde can,  
And listeth of my dreem to lere;  
For now at erste shul ye here  
So selly an avisioun,  
That Isaye, ne Scipioun,  
Ne king Nabugodonosor,  
Pharo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,  
Ne mette swich a dreem as this! (507-517)



Like Saint Paul he is caught up, as it were into the Seventh Heaven — whether in the body or in the spirit, he knows not; but God, thou knowest! (980) — and his progress through the skies is marshalled by Jove's own messenger, the Eagle. Fearing, however, that demons may be practising their occult powers upon him, he quiets his mind with a little prayer directed to Christ to save him "fro fantom and illusioun" (492). Surely his is a divine revelation! But having ranked it so and in consequence having forfeited the privilege of using the psychology of the *somnium animale*, which has stood him in such good stead, he is forced to fall back upon frequent invocations to the gods to help him secure its being accepted as true. May Morpheus, in whose power stands every dream (66–80), and Apollo, the god of wisdom and light, guide him in telling his "avisoun" so that men hearing it will believe (1090–5). And if anyone, out of malice or hostility, shall treat this work lightly or attack it in any way, may the curse of evil dreams and worse fulfilments come upon him (80–107).

After this manner, it seems to me, Chaucer makes use of the various classes of dreams in the composition of his love-visions. By indicating in the introduction and elsewhere to what particular type the poem is to belong and by thus creating a kind of framework, he is able to model the material of his visions according to certain psychological laws. But as an artist he is quick to see that for the purpose of serving as a background for a dream-poem the *somnium naturale* is unsuitable because it is without significance. He finds that the

*somnium coeleste* can be used only within very narrow limits because its sources and manifestations are hardest to understand. But the *somnium animale* is made of the stuff of human experience; it represents the resurging in sleep of the dreamer's waking thoughts, desires, joys, and sorrows. Consequently Chaucer's best dream-poems are those which exemplify the psychology of the *somnium animale*.

## NOTES

## CHAPTER I

1. W. W. Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, C. T., A, 410-444.
2. Skeat, V, 40-42; E. E. Morris, "The Physician in Chaucer," *An English Miscellany*, pp. 338 ff.; Hinckley, *Notes on Chaucer*, pp. 31-36; Hammond, *A Bibliographical Manual*.
3. Quoted from H. P. Cholmeley, *John of Gaddesden and the Rosa Medicine*, pp. 93-94. See Isidore Hispalensis, *Opera*, ed. Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, CXCIX, and the same author's further discussion of the division of medicine into *metodica*, *empirica*, and *logica* in *Liber Etymologiarum*, Venetiis, 1483, lib. iv, cap. 4, fol. 20r.
4. Joannes Salisburiensis, *Polycraticus*, ed. Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, CXCIX, lib. ii, cap. 29, col. 475; cf. Cholmeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97 for translation. See John Flint South, *The Craft of Surgery*, London, 1886, p. 7.
5. Joannes de Burgundia, *De pestilentia liber*, Sloane MS. 3449, fol. 6; quoted from Cholmeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73. Traill, *Social England*, I, thinks that possibly John of Burgundy may have been the model for Chaucer's Doctor. Cf. Barclay's arraignment "Of folysshe Fesygyans and vnlermed that onely followe paractyke knowynge nought of the speculacyon of theyr faculte," *The Ship of Fools*, ed. Jamieson, I, 260-4.
6. *Astronomia Hypocratis de infirmitatibus*, Lugduni, 1508, p. 1.
7. *Liber Rasis de secretis in medicina qui liber Aphorismorum appellatur*, in *Opera parua Abubetri filij Zacharie filij Arasi*, Lugduni, 1511, fol. 243. This Rhazes — Chaucer's 'Razis' (C. T., A, 431) — is Muhammad ibn Zakariya (Abu Bakr), *AL-Razi*, who was born near the middle of the ninth century, studied in Baghdad, and who died A.D. 932. In the work cited above, fols. 239-244, he deals fully with the secret influences of the stars in various illnesses. For further opinions of wise men upon the supremacy of the heavens over earthly things, see Professor Lynn Thorndike's excellent work, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*: Arnoldus de Villanova, II, 855;

Roger Bacon, II, 670; Raymond Lull, II, 871; Petrus de Abano, II, 890; Cecco d'Ascoli, II, 957, etc. Professor Thorndike's book has been invaluable to me in the preparation of this chapter; and though my material was collected before its appearance, I have not hesitated to use freely his expositions and translations of passages which I have at hand.

8. This sketch is taken largely from Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus*, ed. Bridges, I. 377-382. Cf. Thorndike, II, 670-1.

9. Bacon, *op. cit.*, I, 380. I have used in some measure Thorndike's phraseology, II, 670.

10. *Ibid.*, I, 381-382. Thorndike, II, 670.

11. Skeat, V, 32, 40-1; *Secreta Secretorum*, ed. Steele, EETS. E.S., 74, pp. 65 ff.; Constantinus Africanus, *Opera*, Basileae, 1536, pp. 1 ff.; *Liber Ptolomei quattuor tractatum, cum Centiloquio eiusdem Ptolomei & commento haly*, Venetiis, 1484, Verb. LVI; or any full work on medicine from the Middle Ages.

12. Since most mediaeval medical treatises are divided into Theory and Practice (see for example, Haly filius Abbas, *Liber totius medicine necessaria continens*, Lugduni, 1523), the punctuation of this passage should probably be as I have it.

13. The contents of this paragraph are taken from *Astronomia Hypocratis de infirmitatibus*, Lugduni, 1508, probably spurious. Thorndike says of Galen's *Prognostication of Diseases by Astrology*, "This treatise is the same as that ascribed in many manuscripts to Hippocrates," I, 179. Cf. Galen, *De diebus decretoriis*, Paris, 1663, "On the Influence of the Moon," caps. I-VI, "On the Truth of Astrological Medicine," caps. XII-XIII; Hermes Trismegistus, *Iatromathematica*, in Virdung (J), J. Hasfurti *de cognoscendis et medendis . . . moribus ex corporum coelestium positione libri iiii*, 1584 (see translation into English by John Haruey, 1583); Bacon, I, 383-4.

14. Quoted from Bacon, I, 383. See Ptolemaeus (with Haly's commentary), *op. cit.*, Verb. LVI.

15. Bacon, I, 384.

16. *Ibid.*, I, 383; Skeat, V, 382, to C. T., F, 352.

17. Bacon, I, 382; Thorndike, I, 670; Skeat, V, 86, 97.

18. For a full discussion of the diseases attributed respectively to the planets, see Baptista Porta, *Physiognomoniae coelestis libri sex*, Rothomagi, 1650, pp. 18, 21, 25, 28, 35, 50, 55, 59.

19. For a full discussion of *febris putredinis* with its four divisions, *tertiana*, *quartana*, *quotidiana*, and *continua*, caused re-

spectively by the corruption of the humours, cholera, melancholia, phlegm, and blood in the system, see my study in *Englische Studien*, LVIII, reproduced in Chapter IX.

20. For a full account of Mars in this position, see my article in *Jour. Eng. Germ. Philol.*, XXII, revised in Chapter VII.

21. The patient may be called at the third hour before sunrise, the "hour" of Saturn, but let us hope that his constitution will bear him up until the first hour before sun-up.

22. See the pseudo-Hippocrates, *op. cit.*, "Luna in Ariete."

23. For an explanation of the relative importance of angle, succedant, cadent, see Chapter VII, p. 172, note.

24. Mars is thus bereft of his malice, as Chaucer might say, "by the oppression of houses" (LGW., 2590); Skeat, III, 348.

25. For the beneficent influence of Jupiter in nativities and elections and his opposition to Saturn, see Chapter VI, p. 127.

26. For an account of the digesters and purgers of cholera and melancholia, together with the conforters of phlegm, see Richard Saunders, *The Astrological Judgment and Practice of Physic*, London, 1677, pp. 87-93; Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *Opera omnia*, Basileae, 1524, p. 363.

27. Quoted from Thebit ibn Corat, *De Tribus Imaginibus Magicis*, Francoforti, 1559, sig. A1. For further information on images, see Thorndike, II, 164 ff., 177, 220, 257, 327, 350, 588, 610, 673, 802, 835; Wedel, *The Mediaeval Attitude toward Astrology*, pp. 69, 74, 150.

28. See Chaucer's *H. F.*, 1265 ff., where he speaks of clerks who are able to make images in certain ascendants and who are able by the exercise of such natural magic to make a man whole or sick. He implies that an ascendant may be "fortuned" or "infortuned." See Hinckley, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

29. Skeat, V, 40.

30. Bacon, *Opus Majus*, ed. Bridges, I, 395; Thorndike, II, 673 ff.

31. Bacon, *Opera quaedam hactenus inedita*, ed. Brewer, p. 527.

32. Quoted from Bacon, ed. Bridges, I, 384. The full name of this great philosopher-scientist is Thābit ibn Kurrah ibn Marwan ibn Karayā ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Marinos ibn Salamanos (Abu Al Hasan), *Al-Harrani*. He was born A.D. 836 at Harran in Mesopotamia, and died A.D. 901. See Bacon, ed. Bridges, I, 394.

33. *Op. cit.* For an account of Thebit and his work on images, see Thorndike, I, 663.

34. See his *Tractatus Sigillorum*, in Arnaldi Villanovani *Summi philosophi et medici excellentissimi*, Lugduni, 1586, Praxis medicinalis, pp. 30-32. Thorndike discusses this tract (II, 858) and translates Arnold's directions for engraving a seal in Aries.

35. *Op. cit.*, sig. B4.

36. Since there is no suggestion that Chaucer's Doctor employs images made by black magic, I have not gone into that subject. But see Thorndike, II, under "Image" and "Incantation."

37. I have taken this passage almost bodily from Thorndike's excellent exposition, II, 665.

38. Constantini Africani Medici ad Filium *De incantationibus & adiurationibus Epistola*, in *Opera*, Basileae, 1536, pp. 317-18.

39. Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *op. cit.*, p. 30; Thorndike, II, 858.

40. Since Saturn is located in Sagittarius and has his power bereft him by Jupiter posited in oppositional aspect in Gemini, and since Saturn does not aspect Luna, it is not necessary to place on the image either Saturn or Jupiter. The house of death—the eighth now occupied by Scorpio—has no unfortunate planet in it or aspecting it; indeed, the lord of the house of death, in this instance Mars (whose darker mansion is Scorpio), is unfortunately placed, as we have seen and as has been already noted on the image.

41. See Bacon, ed. Bridges, I, 381-382. He quotes and illustrates from the *Centiloquium* of Ptolemaeus with the Haly commentary (*op. cit.*, Verb. LVI); cf. Thorndike, II, 855 ff.

42. For the nature of plants and the influence of Luna in the compounding of medicines, see John of Burgundy, *op. cit.*, p. 72; Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *Tractatus de virtutibus herbarum*, Venetiis, 1499; Pedanii Dioscoridis Anazarbei *De materia medica libri quinque*, ed. Springel in *Opera quae extant*, I; Thorndike, II (see Index "Pharmacy").

43. For discussions upon the diet proper for each month of the year, see *Tractatus Ioannis de Zantuliete barbantini de dietis totius anni*, Lugduni, 1508. See also the *Opera omnia* (Lugduni 1515) of Ishak ibn Sulaiman, Al-Isra'ili, "Liber dietarum vniuersalium," fols. xj-cj, "Liber dietarum particularium," fols.



cij-clvy. Thorndike gives (II, 502-507) interesting extracts from Petrus Hispanus's Commentaries upon Isaac.

44. It does not seem necessary to discuss here further the fifteen celebrated physicians whose works are said to come within the Doctor's course of reading. See Hinckley, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Skeat, V, 31; Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, 393; Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 340. But since none of these commentators seems able to identify Chaucer's "Haly," it might be well at this juncture to distinguish between the writers to whom the poet may have referred (*C. T.*, A, 431). Haly Abbas, whose full name is 'Ali ibn 'Al-Abbas, was a Persian physician called Al-Majusi or Majus, who died A.D. 994 (Cholmeley, *op. cit.*, p. 185); Hali filius Rodbon, whose Arabian name is 'Ali ben Ridhwan ben 'Ali ben Ja 'Far, was born in Ghizeh about A.D. 980; he was famous during the Middle Ages for his commentary on the *Tegni* of Galen (Cholmeley, p. 167). Albohāzen Haly filius Abenragel, whose full name is 'Ali ibn Abī Al-Rajjāl (Abū Hasan), was a famous Arabian astrologer, born at Cordova, who lived toward the beginning of the eleventh century (see Michaud, *Biographie Universelle*); I shall have occasion to quote from him anon. He must not be confused with either Albohazen or Albohali. Albohazen, respectively Alhazen, Alhacen, Alocen, named in full Hasan ibn Al-Haitam (Abu 'Alī Al), *Al-Basu*, was born in Cairo A.D. 1038. He was especially known as the author of a work on optics, cf. Risnerus, editor, *Opticae Thesaurus Alhazeni Arabis libri septem*, 1572, and Bauer, *Die Psychologie Alhazens auf Grund von Alhazens Optik (Beitr. Gesch. der Philos. des Mittelal., Bd. 10, H. 5)*. He is mentioned by Chaucer, who calls him "Alocen," in connection with certain "queynte mirours" and perspectives (*C. T.*, F, 232). The Albohaly who sometimes figures in mediaeval literature is none other than Avicenna. See MS. Royal 12. G. VI in the British Museum, *Albohaly Avicennae Canon Medicinæ*, etc. Chaucer's "Haly" may be identified with Haly filius Rodbon, Skeat says, V, 42 (but see his query in the *Academy*, March 2, 1889); or with Haly Abbas as Hinckley suggests, *op. cit.*, p. 33; certainly *not* with Alhazen, as Morris has it, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

45. Quoted from John Flint South, *The Craft of Surgery*, p. 7.

46. *Polycraticus*, ed. Migne, *op. cit.*, CXIX, lib. ii, cap. xxix, 475; trans. Cholmeley, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

47. Ahasveri Fritschi *Medicus peccans, sive Tractatus de*

*peccatis medicorum*, Norimbergae, 1684, Conclusio V, p. 27. See also Conclusio VIII, pp. 33-37.

48. See *The Laws of Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries*, London, 1767, beginning with Henry the Eighth's "Act for Appointing Physicians and Surgeons," 1511. South says, "In 1215 the ecclesiastics were debarred by order of Pope Innocent III from undertaking any operation involving the shedding of blood. . . . By two subsequent decrees, the one issued by Pope Boniface the Eighth at the close of the thirteenth century and the second by Pope Clement the Fifth about the beginning of the fourteenth century, surgery was formally separated from physic, and the priests were absolutely forbidden to practice the art," *op. cit.*, p. 12. In Chaucer's day the Doctor of Physic was much superior in dignity and authority to the Doctor of Surgery. For regulations governing the School of Salerno, see H. E. Handerson, *The School of Salerno*, pp. 43-44, and Cholmeley, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

49. Cf. *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. Skeat, C, IX, 291-297; *The Testament of Cressid*, ed. Skeat, VIII, 240-253; Wright's *Political Songs* (Camden Soc.), P. 333.

50. Christopher Merritt, *A Short View of the Frauds and Abuses Committed by Apothecaries*, London, 1669, pp. 14-15. Cf. *Lex Talionis*, or a Short Reply to Dr. Merritt's Books, London, 1660, pp. 7 ff.; *A Discourse setting forth the Unhappy Condition of the Practice of Physic in London*, London, 1670, by Jonathan Goddard; Merritt, *Self-Conviction*, London, 1670, and *A Short Reply to the Postscript*, 1670; the anonymous *Medice cura Teipsum*, 1671; Robert Pitt, *The Frauds and Villanies of the Common Practice of Physick*, London, 1705.

51. *The Accomplisht Physician, the Honest Apothecary, and the Skilful Surgeon*, London, 1670, pp. 74-75.

52. *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

53. On the compounding of electuaries, see Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *Opera omnia*, Basileae, 1524, p. 463; Constantinus Africanus, *op. cit.*, pp. 202, 270-274; Haly filius Abbas, *op. cit.*, lib. X, caps. vii, viii.

54. The material used in this chapter was published first in the *Philological Quarterly*, IV, pp. 1-24.

## CHAPTER II

1. The materials in this chapter were first published in "The Malady of Chaucer's Summoner," *Modern Philology*, XIX, 395-404, and "The Mormal of Chaucer's Cook," *Modern Language Notes*, XXXVI, 274-276.

2. Lanfrank's *Science of Chirurgie*, EETS., 102, pp. 193 ff. (Cf. also *Cyrurgia parua Lanfranci*, Venetiis, 1499, f. 182). Guy de Chauliac seems to be impatient with the classification of skin diseases attempted by his fraternal enemy, *La Grande Chirurgie*, ed. Nicaise, Paris, 1890, p. 413, or *Cyrurgia Gvidonis de Cavliaco*, Venetiis, 1499, f. 51, r. 1. For further discussion of terminology among the Greeks, Arabians, Romans, and others, see *Seven Books of Paulus Aegineta*, trans. Francis Adams, II, 1-35 *passim*, and Commentaries to sections 1 and 2 of Book IV; J. H. Baas, *The History of Medicine*, pp. 313-15.

3. This is Constantinus Africanus of Carthage (1015-87), mentioned by Chaucer in his list of celebrated physicians (C. T., A, 433) and also in connection with a work called *De coitu* (C. T., E, 1807-11). The curious reader may verify Chaucer's reference to *De coitu* by consulting Constantinus's *Opera, conquisita undique magno studio jam primum typis evulgata*, Basileae, 1536, pp. 306 ff.

4. *Op. cit.*, Lib. VII, cap. xviii, p. 161.

5. Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine*, Lugduni, 1510, f. clxx, v1. For a discussion of Gilbert's life, see Handerson's *Gilbertus Anglicus, Medicine of the Thirteenth Century*.

6. *Batman upon Bartholome*, London, 1582, pp. 114 ff. This is an English translation made in 1397 of Bartholomaeus de Glanvilla's *De proprietatibus rerum*, composed in 1366; see the Basil edition of 1475, p. 63, for the foregoing passage. On the author see Se Boyar's article in *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, XIX, 168 ff.

7. Bernardus de Gordon, *Practica dicta Lilium medicinae*, Lyons, 1491, sig. d6, v2. This is Chaucer's "Bernard" (C. T., A, 434), concerning whom consult Hinckley's *Notes on Chaucer*, p. 35.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

9. Andrew Boorde's *Introduction and Dietary*, EETS. E. S., 10, p. 101.

10. Willan and T. Bateman, *A Practical Synopsis of Cutaneous Diseases*, Philadelphia, 1818, pp. 297-99. For further division of the "genus gutta rosea" into three species, see Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia*, Boston, 1809, Class ii, 1, 4, 6; iv, 1, 2, 13, 14.

11. Cf. Boorde, *op. cit.*, p. 101; *Batman vpon Bartholome*, p. 63; Bateman, *op. cit.*, p. 294, note; *Cyurgia Rogerii*, Venetiis, 1499, f. 225 — or any history of medicine.

12. See *Seven Books*, trans. Adams: Actuarius, II, 11; Avicenna, II, 12; Serapion (Chaucer's "Serapion," A, 432), II, 13. Cf. Haly filius Abbas, *Liber totius medicine*, Lyons, Lib. VIII, cap. xv.

13. *Op. cit.*, cap. xxii.

14. *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

15. Ioannes de Gadesden, *Rosa Anglica practica medicinae*, Pavia, 1492, car. 56, r1. I quote from a translation of this passage found in Cholmeley's *John of Gaddesden and the Rosa medicinae*, pp. 45-46.

16. Baas, *op. cit.*, p. 231; Adams, *Seven Books*, II, 14.

17. *Batman vpon Bartholome*, p. 113. Cf. Arnoldus de Villanova, *Practica medicina*, Venezia, 1494, f. g1, v1.

18. *Op. cit.*, f. g1, v1.

19. *Op. cit.*, f. ccxl, v1.

20. It is interesting to note that the physiognomists also associated this sign with leprosy: "Supercilia plane depilia, Luem Veneream Leprem, vel aliam sanguinis corruptionem indicant," Rudolphus Goclenius, *Physiognomica et Chiromantica Specialia*, Hamburgi, 1661, p. 60; cf. Samuelis Fvchsii Cvslino Pomerani *Metoposcopia & Ophthalmoscopia*, Argentinae, 1615, p. 91.

21. For example see Gaddesden's chapter "De infectione ex coitu leprosi," *op. cit.*, car. 61, r2.

22. *Batman vpon Bartholome*, p. 113.

23. The *Isagoge*, by Joannitius (Arabic, Hunain), trans. Cholmeley, *op. cit.*, App. D, p. 145.

24. Adams, I, 117, 118.

25. *Op. cit.*, pp. 279, 351, 239. Cf. *The Babees Book*, ed. Furnivall, pp. 156, 214.

26. *Batman vpon Bartholome*, p. 330.

27. Adams, *op. cit.*, I, 172, 174.

28. *Op. cit.*, p. 190, and notes.

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 459.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 631, 633. Cf. Lanfrank's "Of medicyns cauteratiuis & corrosiuis," *op. cit.*, pp. 349 ff. The chief ingredient of these ointments is arsenic.

31. Indeed it is so translated in Lanfrank, *op. cit.*, pp. 178, 293. See two descriptions of the "mormal," *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXXIII, 379, *Trans. Conn. Acad. Arts and Sciences*, XXIII, 27.

32. *Chirurgia edita et compilata ab excell. domino fratre Theodorico episcopo Ceruiensi*, Venetiis, 1499, Lib. III, cap. xlix.

33. *Op. cit.*, sig. d7, v1. Cf. also *Cyrvrgia Rogerii*, Venetiis, 1499, "De malo mortuo," f. 69, r1; Gvy de Chavliac, *op. cit.*, "mal mort," pp. 8, 420, 551.

34. *Op. cit.*, f. 94, r1.

35. *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

36. See my note, "The Bottom of Hell," *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXXVIII, 253.

### CHAPTER III

1. "Chaucer's Pardoner and the Pope's Pardoners," J. J. Jusserand, *Essays on Chaucer*, 2nd Ser. No. 2, p. 423. Cf. also the same author's *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, p. 210.

2. "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," F. Tupper, *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXIX, 115.

3. "The Pardoner's Tavern," F. Tupper, *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, XIII, 558. This theory was exploded by Lowes, *PMLA.*, XXX, 260 ff.

4. *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, XIII, 565.

5. G. L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, pp. 212 ff., and a fuller discussion by the same author in the *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXII, 830 ff.

6. See my study, "The Secret of Chaucer's Pardoner," *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, XVIII, 593 ff.

7. Walter Clyde Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty*, pp. 3, 51, 66, etc.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 48; J. Fürst, *Philologus*, LXI, 384; G. L. Hamilton, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XX, 80; G. P. Krapp, *MLN.*, XIX, 235.

9. He was a famous rhetorician and historian who flourished under Trajan and Hadrian and who died about 144 A.D. For

a full discussion of his life and influence, see R. Foerster, *Scriptores physiognomici*, I, lxxiv ff.

10. Polemonis *Physiognomon*, in *Scriptores physiognomoniae veteres*, ed. I. G. F. Franzius, 1780, p. 209.

11. *Anonymi de Physiognomonia liber Latinus*, ed. Foerster, *op. cit.*, II, 121 ff.

12. *Secreta Secretorum*, ed. R. Steele, EETS. E. S., 74, p. 223/18, 231/8.

13. Foerster, *op. cit.*, II, 22. Rudolphus Goelenius agrees in substance (*Physiognomica et Chiromantica Specialia*, Hamburgi, 1661, p. 35), and adds regarding the color: "Valde vero flavi et albicantes rudelatam, magnitatem et rusticitatem notant," p. 37. He states further: "Sed valdi ruffi insipientiam, iracundiam et insidias; imprudentiam et animi malignitatem indicant," p. 38.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 82. (But for a contrary opinion see Admantius, in Franzius, *op. cit.*, pp. 259, 391).

15. Admantii Sophistae *Physiognomonicon*, trans. Franzius, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

16. Polemonis *Physiognomonicon*, trans. Franzius, p. 308.

17. Rasis (Mohammed Abou-Bekr ibn Zacaria), born at Rey (Ragès), and died 923, *Biographie Universelle*, Michaud.

18. Baptista Porta, referring to Polemon, has this to say about men without beard: "Imberbis viri mulieribus & spadonis similes existunt. Ait Polemon, spadones naturali nequitia pessimis esse moribus, ingenio immites, dolosus, facinorosos, aliisque sceleribus se immiscentes," *De humana physiognomonia*, Hanoviae, 1593, p. 261.

19. *Rasis Physiognomoniae versio Latina a Gerardo Cremonensi facta*, in Foerster, II, 178.

20. Foerster, II, 58.

21. *Bartholomeus de Proprietatibus Rerum*, trans. Trevisa, 1495, Lib. V, cap. lxvi.

22. *Op. cit.*, De Voce, Lib. V, caps. xxiii, xlix. Cf. Porta's fuller explanation, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

23. *Op. cit.*, De Barba, Lib. V, cap. xv.

24. Foerster, II, 58.

25. Michaud, *op. cit.* Favorinus was still alive in the year 155 A.D., Foerster, I, lxxx ff.

26. Polemonis *de physiognomonia liber Arabice et Latine*, ed. G. Hoffman, in Foerster, I, pp. 160-4.

27. My theory, therefore, in no way vitiates the sound conclusions drawn by Jusserand in the article cited above.



28. For a discussion of Chaucer's probable purpose in this satire, see *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale*, a critical edition, J. Koch, p. xxx.

29. *Chaucer and His Poetry*, pp. 211-212.

30. Cf. Steele's Introduction to *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, EETS. E. S. 66.

31. *The Tale of Beryn*, ed. Furnivall and Stone, EETS. E. S. 105.

32. For a different interpretation of this interruption, cf. Ten Brink, *History of English Literature*, trans. Robinson, II, 161, and R. F. Jones's excellent study, "A Conjecture on the Wife of Bath's Prologue," *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, XXIV, p. 541.

#### CHAPTER IV

1. *Secreta Secretorum*, ed. R. Steele, EETS. E. S., LXXIV, p. 220. With this should be compared by Lydgate and Burgh, *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, ed. Steele, EETS. E. S., LXVI, p. 104.

2. Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie, and Chiromancie, Metoposcopie, Dreams, and the Art of Memory*, London, 1671, p. 189.

3. Aristotle's *Physiognomonika*, ed. R. Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, I, 55.

4. *Polemonis de physiognomonia liber Arabice et Latine*, ed. G. Hoffman, in Foerster, *op. cit.*, I, 204. This work is edited also in I. G. F. Franzius's *Scriptores physiognomoniae veteres*, 1780, pp. 209 ff.

5. *Anonymi de physiognomonia liber Latinus*, ed. Foerster, II, 133.

6. F. Tupper, "The Quarrels of the Canterbury Pilgrims," *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, XIV, 265.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

8. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, pp. 29, 37.

9. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, p. 31.

10. *Rasis physiognomoniae versio Latina a Gerardo Cremonensi facta*, ed. Foerster, II, 176.

11. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, 35.

12. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, II, 173 f.

13. *Ibid.*, Foerster, II, 138. A like opinion may be found in

*Physiognomica & Chiromantica specialia*, à Rodolpho Goclenio, Marpurgi Cattorum, 1621, p. 29.

14. *Physiognomoniae secreti secretorum pseudaristotelici versiones Latinae*, ed. Foerster, II, 214.

15. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, II, 170.

16. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, 67.

17. *Ibid.*, I, 232.

18. *Ibid.*, II, 206.

19. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, Rolls Series, No. 21, ed. Brewer, IV, 240.

20. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, II, 32, 132.

21. *Op. cit.*, p. 182.

22. *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

23. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, II, 168, 205, 226 ff.

24. *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

25. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, 85, 103; II, 169, 209, 266.

26. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, 266.

27. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, I, 228; II, 203-4. Cf. Goclenius, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

28. *Op. cit.*, Foerster, II, 167.

29. T. R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, 394. Cf. also J. L. Lowes, *Modern Philology*, XI, 391 ff., and O. F. Emerson, *ibid.*, XVII, 287.

30. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

31. *La Metoposcopie*, Paris, 1658. He appends to his treatise the original discussion of moles by Melampus (with a French translation). Cf. Baptista Porta, *Physiognomoniae coelestis libri sex*, Rothomagi, 1650, pp. 125-139.

32. *Op. cit.*, p. 287.

33. Translated in Cardan, *op. cit.*, p. 223. Melampus flourished in the time of Julius Caesar.

34. *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

35. *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

36. *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

37. *Op. cit.*, p. 334.

38. *Op. cit.*, p. 335. The materials in this chapter were first published in *PMLA.*, XXXV, 189-209.

## CHAPTER V

1. G. L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, p. 189.  
 2. Professor Skeat has already given sufficient explanation of the astrological terminology used by Chaucer: see "mansions," *op. cit.*, I, 497; III, 348; "term," V, 395; "face," V, 372, 395. For his discussion of the conjunction of Venus and Mars in Taurus see his notes on "The Complaynt of Mars," II, 468, III, 249. See also J. M. Manly, "On the Date and Interpretation of Chaucer's Complaint of Mars," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, V, 107 ff. The other mansion of Venus is Libra.

3. That Venus is the dominant star in this nativity is suggested by the power which she exerts over the native and by the fact that she is further referred to as "my dame." And that Venus is situated also in the ascendent sign Taurus—and is therefore in conjunction with Mars—seems certain, because the good Wife has the "prente of sēynt Venus seel" upon her person; Venus in any other than the ascendent sign would be powerless to leave a mark.

4. Chaucer's immense knowledge of astrology has been pointed out by many scholars: Skeat's notes to *The Astrolabe*; T. R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, 395 ff.; Florence M. Grimm, "Astrological Lore in Chaucer," *Univ. Neb. Stud. in Lang. and Lit.*, No. 2, 1919; A. E. Brae's Introduction to his edition of *The Astrolabe*, etc.

5. *Absolutissimae Chyromantiae Libri Octo*, In quibus quicquid ad chyromantiae, physiognomiae, & naturalis astrologiae perfectionem spectat, continentur, Coloniae Agrippinae, 1563, p. 496. A figure may be found facing the same page. Taisnier is following closely Ioannes Indagine, *Introductiones apotelesmaticae elegantes, in chyromantiam, physiognomiam, astrologiam naturalem*, Lugduni, 1556.

6. Philippi Finella, *De metroposcopia*, Antverpiae, 1648, p. 134. See my article in *PMLA.*, XXXVII, 34, for further quotations from this work.

7. Erra Pater (pseud.), *The Book of Knowledge*, Boston, P. 14.

8. Ioannes Baptista Porta, *Coelestis physiognomoniae libri sex*, Neapoli, 1603, p. 116.

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 61. To this imposing array of opinion may be added that of Finella, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Taisnier, *op. cit.*, p. 493; *Les Oeuvres de M. Iean Belot*, Lyon, 1654, p. 235; Rosa Baughan, *The Influence of the Stars*, London, 1889, p. 26; William Lilly, *Christian Astrology, modestly Treated of in Three Books*, London, 1659, pp. 85, 265; Iean de Indagine, *Chiromance & Physiognomie* (trans. Antoine de Moulin Masconnois), Lyon, 1549, p. 279; Ioannes Fredericus Helvetius, *Amphitheatrum physiognomiae medicum*, Hydelbergi, 1660, p. 79, and the same author's *Microscopium physiognomiae medicum*, Amstelodami, 1676, pp. 87-91 — all of whom are in more or less amplified agreement with Porta and his authorities.

10. *Op. cit.*, pp. 64-65. Compare like accounts by Helvetius, *Amphitheatrum*, p. 79; Taisnier, *op. cit.*, p. 493; Finella, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 36.

11. Helvetius, *Microscopium*, pp. 91-95.

12. Indagine, *op. cit.*, p. 279. It is a well-known astrological fact that Venus is found only in roots of nativities of phlegmatic natures, Belot, *op. cit.*, p. 235. The Wife of Bath's nature, therefore, is phlegmatic.

13. It may be of interest to observe how the above conclusions are strengthened by reference to the principles of geomancy. Skeat has already explained how fortunes may be determined by the use of the geomantic method (V, 82-83); it is necessary here only to point out that the figure which he calls Puella (p. 83) and to which he assigns — quite erroneously — the zodiacal sign Libra, is the geomantic "figure" of the Wife of Bath and corresponds to the sign Taurus. (The other figure of Venus is Amissa, corresponding to the sign Libra, her other mansion.) The following interpretation is given by M. Belot: "Alors qu'il se rencontre *Puella* ou *Amissio*, qui sont les deux maisons de Venus, l'une representent Taurus & l'autre (Libra) au sort des points, ils nous representent l'homme ou la femme Venerienne; s'ils sont nés, s'il se rencontre *Puella* ou *Taurus* en leur ascendant, ils sont d'une couleur pure, & le corps massif, nitide, beau, net & sans macule, les levres grosses, eminentes, particulièrement la supérieure; ils sont d'une stature petite; ils ont la face belle, les cheveux longs, non crespus, blandides, les yeux grands," *op. cit.*, p. 249. For further description see *Le Sieve de Pervchio, La Chiromance, la Physionomie, et la Geomance*, Paris, 1657, p. 228.

14. *Op. cit.*, p. 279.

15. *Op. cit.*, p. 147. Cf. Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel, *Libri de iudiciis astrorum*, Basileae, 1551, pp. 12, 170 (Mars), p. 165 (Venus); Firmicus Iulius Maternus, *De nativitatibus*, Venetiis, 1497, sigs. d<sub>1</sub>, f<sub>6</sub>.

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 615.

17. Indagine, *op. cit.*, p. 278. Cf. also the account of M. Belot (*op. cit.*, p. 233), which concludes with the remark that "cette nature est fort vicieuse."

18. Guido Bonatus, "Choice Aphorismes of Cardan's Seven Segments," in *Anima astrologiae, or a Guide for Astrologers*, (Trans. W. Lilly), London, 1683, pp. 9-33, *passim*.

19. *Christian Astrology*, p. 595.

20. Quoted from Porta, *op. cit.*, Rothomagi, 1560, p. 77.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

22. This paragraph is a free translation of the exposition given by M. Belot (*op. cit.*, pp. 219-221) except that I have omitted his irrelevant illustration which takes up the Sun and certain other planets in conjunction in the sign Aries. For further discussion of natural marks and moles see Lilly, *op. cit.*, pp. 149, 155; Pervchio, *op. cit.*, p. 104; H. M. Cardan, *La Metoposcopia*, Paris, 1658, p. 220; Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie and Chiromancie, Metoposcopia, Dreams, and the Art of Memory*, London, 1671, Introduction to the section on Physiognomy; M. de Mirbel, *Le Palais du Prince du Sommeil, ou est enseignée L'Oniromancie, Autrement L'Art de Devinir par les Songes*, Lyon, 1670.

23. Each sign of the zodiac is divided, for astrological purposes, into three equal parts: from one to ten degrees is called the first face, from ten to twenty the second face, from twenty to thirty the third face. Cf. Skeat, V, 395.

24. *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

27. *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

28. *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 223. Cf. Pervchio, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

30. The physiognomists agree on the significance of large hips, see Angellus Blondus, *De cognitione hominis per aspectum*, Romae, 1544, p. xv; Rudolphus Goclenius, *Physiognomica et chiromantica specialia*, Hamburgi, 1661, p. 93; Porta, *De*

*humana physiognomia*, Hanoviae, p. 249; Rasis and others in *Scriptores physiognomonici*, ed. R. Foerster, II, 172, 217, etc.

31. See Goclenius, *op. cit.*, p. 63; Indagine, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

32. On the significance of the Wife's voice, see *PMLA.*, XXXVII, p. 45, note 36.

33. For a full discussion of the Wife of Bath's teeth set far apart, see my study in *PMLA.*, XXXVII, p. 45, note 38.

34. For a discriminating appreciation of this story, see Lounsbury, *op. cit.*, III, 418.

35. Ten Brink, *The History of English Literature*, trans. Robinson, II, 163.

36. R. K. Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer* (First ed.), p. 239.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 231. Cf. Ten Brink, II, 126.

38. W. E. Mead, "The Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale," *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XVI, 388 ff.

39. "More About Chaucer's Wife of Bath," *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXXVII, 51.

## CHAPTER VI

1. See Cook, "The Historical Background of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," *Trans. Conn. Acad. Arts and Sciences*, XX; Lowes, "The Loveres Maladye of Hereos," *Mod. Philol.*, XI, 491 ff.; Cook, "The Arming of the Combatants in the *Knight's Tale*," *Jour. Eng. Germc. Philol.*, IV, 504 ff.; Robinson, "Elements of Realism in the *Knight's Tale*," *J. E. GPh.*, XIV, 226 ff.; Curry, "Chaucer's Tempest Again," *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXXVI, 272; Ker, *Epic and Romance*, pp. 364 ff. Most of the materials of this chapter were published in *Anglia*, XLVII.

2. J. S. P. Tatlock, "Astrology and Magic in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*," *Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, pp. 339 ff.

3. All this passage, ll. 2014-2040, is original with Chaucer except this line, which was suggested by *Teseide* VII, 37. In comparing the *Knight's Tale* with the *Teseide* I have used Mr. Henry Ward's side-notes to the Cambridge and Lansdowne Texts in the *Six-Text Print of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. Furnivall.

4. Quoted from Skeat, V, 81.

5. Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel, *Libri de iudiciis astrorum*, Basileae, 1531, p. 11. Cf. *Libellus Ysagogicus* Ab-



dilazi . . . qui dicitur Alchabitivs, Venetiis, 1591, sig. bb<sub>3</sub>v. This is the Arabian astrologer 'Abd al 'Azziz ibn 'Uthmán, al Kabísí.

6. William Lilly, *Christian Astrology* . . . in Four Books, London, 1647, p. 67.

7. For a discussion of geomancy and the geomantic figures, see Skeat, V, 82. He observes, rightly, that the other "figure" of Mars is Puer and not Puella, this last being one of the figures of Venus. I suspect that Chaucer's knowledge of geomancy was extremely limited, hence his confusion of these two figures. Cf. my study, "Fortuna maior," *MLN.*, XXXVIII, 95.

8. Quoted from Skeat, V, 86. See further on astrological hours, Alchabitius, *op. cit.*, sig. bb<sub>6</sub>; *The Compost of Ptolemaeus*, London, 1535, cap. xl; Richard Saunders, *Palmistry*, London, 1664, pp. 517-548.

9. From Skeat, V, 86.

10. Albohazen Haly, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

11. Quoted from Guido Bonatus, *De astronomia tractatus X*, Basileae, 1850, col. 101.

12. *Compost of Ptolemaeus*, cap. xliii. Cf. Lilly, p. 57, who says that Saturn runs his course in "29 years, 157 days, or thereabouts."

13. *Op. cit.*, sig. bb<sub>2</sub>. Cf. Haly, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Bartholomaeus de Glanvilla, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Venetiis, 1483, lib. VIII, cap. xxiii.

14. *Op. cit.*, Pars III, cap. lxiii.

15. Albumasar, *De magnis coniunctionibus annorum reuolutionibus*, Venetiis, 1489, sig. h<sub>3</sub>. This is the Arabian astrologer Ja 'Far ibn Múhammad (Abu Ma 'sar), Al-Bálkhí.

16. Lilly, *op. cit.*, p. 59. Cf. Richard Saunders, *The Astrological Judgment and Practice of Physic*, London, 1677, p. 19, for a still further list of Saturnalian diseases, and pp. 86 ff. for the cure of them. See also Joannes Baptista Porta, *Physiognomiae coelestis libri sex*, Rothomagi, 1650, p. 18, for diseases attributed by various authorities to Saturn.

17. Mr. Henry Ward supposes that certain lines in Chaucer's description of Lycurgus, only one of the many knights mentioned in the *Teseide*, are taken from Boccaccio's description of Agamemnon: 2129, *Tes.* VI, 14; 2130, *Tes.* VI, 21; 2135, *Tes.* 21; 2138-9, *Tes.*, VI, 21; 2141-2, *Tes.* VI, 22. Otherwise the passage seems to be original with Chaucer.

18. Mr. Ward grants the passage, ll. 2156-2180, to be original except the following lines, which find some suggestion in the *Teseide*: 2162, *Tes.* VI, 17; 2163-4, VI, 16; 2175, VI, 41; 2158, VI, 29.

19. Claudius Ptolemaeus, *De iudiciis astrologicis*, in *Opera*, Basileae, 1541, p. 473.

20. *Op. cit.*, sig. bb4.

21. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

22. Porta, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

23. *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

25. Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie & Chiromancie*, London, 1653, p. 152.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 473.

27. *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

28. Porta, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 17, 20.

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

31. Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie, Chiromancie, Metoposcopia*, p. 151.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

33. Undoubtedly, I think, "kempe" means rugged, rough, unkempt; and the "heres on hise browes stoute" are eyebrows. But see Skeat's note to this line, V, 84.

34. *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXIII, 54.

35. *Summi in omni philosophia viri Constantini Africani*, Basileae, 1539. My outline is taken from the following chapters: *De virtutibus*, p. 79; *De uirtute naturali in epate*, pp. 81-87; *De uirtute spiritali dilantante et constringente*, pp. 89-91; *De uirtute animata*, pp. 91 ff. A garbled account of Constantinus's medical theory may be found in Bartholomaeus de Glanvilla (Anglicus), *De proprietatibus rerum*, Lugduni, 1452, fol. b<sup>ss</sup>ff.; or in Batman's translation made in 1397, *Batman upon Batholome*, London, 1582, fol. 16b ff.

36. Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *Opera omnia*, Basileae, 1524, p. 22; otherwise his classification is similar to that of Constantinus. See p. 23 for the editor's outline.

37. Constantinus, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

38. Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine*, Lugduni, 1510, fol. clxxxiii.

39. *Ibid.*, *De uirtute in genere*, col. clxxxiii, verso.

40. *Ibid.*, fol. clxxxv.

41. *Ibid.*, fol. clxxxvii, verso.
42. Richard Saunders, *The Astrological Judgment and Practice of Physic*, London, 1677, p. 81.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 102 ff.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
47. For accounts of ancient usages in blood-letting, see Francis Adams, *The Seven Books of Paulus Aegineta*, II, 316-319, 324-328; Constantinus, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-331; Arnoldus, *op. cit.*, pp. 366 ff.
48. For digesters and purgers of choler and melancholy caused by Saturn in the various signs, see Saunders, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-93, 120-3; Arnoldus, *op. cit.*, p. 363.
49. See Cicero, *De natura deorum*, lib. II, cap. 1921; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, in *Opera*, Vercellis, 1809, lib. VII; Isidore, *Etymologiarum libri XX*, lib. III, cap. xi, xxiii; Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, *Mytologiarum*, lib. I, cap. ii, in *Auctores Mythographi Latini*, ed. Staveren, 1742; Caius Julius Hyginus, *Poeticon Astronomicon*, cap. xiii-xx, ed. Staveren, 1742.
50. Albericus, philosophus, *De deorum imaginibus libellus*, ed. Staveren, *op. cit.* For a detailed account of the sources used in this work, see Robertus Raschke, *De Alberico Mythologo*, in *Bresl. Phil. Abhandl.*, H. 45. He thinks that the primary sources are Fulgentius, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella, and the secondary sources Cicero, Hyginus, and Isidore.
51. Albericus describes the planets-gods in the following order: Saturn (cap. I), Jupiter (II), Mars (III), Sol (IV), Venus (V), Mercury (VI), Luna (VII). Skeat has reproduced in part the descriptions of Venus (V, 78), Mars (V, 82), and Diana (V, 82), but he has omitted as not being "material" the astronomical remarks of Albericus. If Chaucer drew from this source his descriptions of the gods—and that seems likely—I see no reason why he might not also have received from this same source the idea of treating them as planets.
52. *Allegoriae poeticae*, seu de veritate ac expositione poeticarum fabularum libri quatuor Alberico Londonensi Authore, (Paris), 1520. Raschke does not seem to have known of this important work.
53. Bartholomaeus de Glanvilla, *op. cit.*, Lyons, 1482, sig. ik<sub>5</sub>v.
54. *Ibid.*, sig. ik<sub>6</sub>r.

55. *Ibid.*, sig. ik<sub>6</sub>r.
56. *Ibid.*, sig. ik<sub>6</sub>v.
57. *Ibid.*, sig. ik<sub>8</sub>.
58. *Batman vppon Bartholome*, London, 1582. For myths with interpretations of Saturn, see lib. VIII, cap. xxiii; Mars, VIII, xxv; Venus, VIII, xxvi, etc.
59. Robert Greene, *Planetomachia*, London, 1585, p. 3.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
61. *Ibid.*, sig. B<sub>2</sub>-F<sub>2</sub>.
62. *Ibid.*, sig. G<sub>1</sub>-I<sub>1</sub>.
63. See B. L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius*, p. 118.
64. Boethius, *De consolacione philosophie*, trans. Chaucer, ed. Skeat, Book IV, Prose VI, 45-100.
65. *Idem.*, 100-110.
66. On Fortune see Book II, Proses ii, vii, etc., and Jefferson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 ff.
67. Bk. II, M. viii; III, M. ix; IV, M. vi. Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
68. Bk. V, Pr. i. Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
69. See Chapter V.
70. See Chapter VII.
71. These sentiments are attributed to Theseus in the *Teseide*, but by the skilful introduction of 1.2838 Chaucer has transferred them to the old Egeus.
72. These passages were suggested by certain lines in the *Teseide*.

## CHAPTER VII

1. Skeat, III, xl. Cf. also Bech, *Anglia*, V, 365-371. The materials of this chapter were first published under the title "O Mars, O Atazir," *J. E. G. Ph.*, XXII, 347 ff.
2. Ioannes Baptista Porta, *Coelestis physiognomiae libri sex*, Neapoli, 1603, p. 61. Cf. Albohazen Haly filius Abenragel, *Libri de iudiciis astrorum*, Basileae, 1551, p. 171; Mā Shā'a Allāh Al Misrī (Messahala, 754-813), *De ratione circuli & stellarum*, in *Astronomici scriptores*, Basileae, 1533, p. 119; Firmicus Maternus, *De nativitatibus*, Venetiis, 1497, sig. e<sub>1</sub>; Claudii Ptolemaei Pelvensis Alexandrini *Omnia, que extant, opera*, Basileae, 1541, p. 481.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 169.
4. *Idem.* Cf. also Porta, *op. cit.*, p. 107; Ptolemaeus, *op. cit.*, p. 482; Ja 'far ben Muhammad al-Balchi abu Ma' sar (Albumasar), *De magnis conjunctionibus annorum revolutionibus*, Augsburg, 1489, sig. E<sub>4</sub>; Abou Bakr ibn Al Kasil, Al Kharaschi Abubather (Alubather), *Liber natiuitatum de Arabico in Latinum translatus*, Venetiis, 1501, fol. 7v.
5. See Albumasar, *op. cit.*, sig. G<sub>2</sub>; Haly, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 165 — or any other astrology mentioned in these notes.
6. *Op. cit.*, fol. 16r. Cf. Skeat, V, 65.
7. Skeat (V, 408) is inclined to think that the *Man of Law's Tale* was originally composed about 1380 and that, at the time of revision (probably about 1387), various independent passages were interpolated. On the relative dates of these stories see Tatlock, *Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works*, ch. v, § 6; Hammond, *A Bibliographical Manual*, pp. 282-3.
8. For a full discussion of the popularity accorded the science of elections among ancient astrologers, see Wedel's *Mediaeval Attitude toward Astrology*, pp. 53-5, 65, 149. Anyone in Chaucer's time might have elected a fitting time for beginning a voyage or a journey. Haly, *op. cit.*, 327 ff., devotes forty folio pages to all kinds of elections, giving a whole section to the subject *De electione itineris*. Cf. Ptolemaeus, pp. 493 ff.
9. Ioannis ab Indagine, *Introductiones apotelesmaticae in physiognomiam*, Argentorati, 1622, pp. 125-6. Cf. Ioannis Taisnier, *Absolutissimae Chyromantiae Libri Octo*, Coloniae Agrippinae, 1563, p. 494.
10. *Op. cit.*, sig. E<sub>1</sub>.
11. *Op. cit.*, p. 319.
12. *Op. cit.*, V, 150. Cf. Albumasar, sig. F<sub>4</sub>; William Lilly, *An Introduction to Astrology*, p. 63.
13. *Op. cit.*, p. 106. Cf. Alchabitius, *Libellus ysagogicus*, Venetijs, 1482, sig. b<sub>1</sub>.
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 156.
15. William Lilly, *The Astrologer's Guide*, Lon. 1886, p. 5.
16. *Op. cit.*, p. 303. Cf. further on the ten evil situations of the Moon, Lilly, *op. cit.*, p. 4; Ioannis Ganivetius, *Amicus medicorum*, Lvgduni, 1550, p. 170; Zaehl, Sahl ibn Bashr Hóbib ibn Hani (Abu-'uthman), *De electionibus*, Basileae, 1533, p. 114.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 373. The interested reader will find detailed discussions of the *good* aspects and positions of Luna, for elections, in Haly, pp. 65, 328.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 373.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

21. *Op. cit.*, sig. I7.

22. *Op. cit.*, p. 299.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 394.

27. Goclenius, R., *Astrologae generalis*, Marpurgi, 1618, p. 134.

28. *Op. cit.*, p. 507.

29. Lilly, *An Introduction to Astrology*, London, 1886, pp. 240-44.

30. Haly, *op. cit.*, p. 65. Note the same author's discussion of planetary influences to be observed in elections of *good* marriages, p. 65. Cf. Zaehl, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

31. R. Dozy, *Glossaire des Mots Espagnols et Portugais dérivés de l'Arabe*, p. 207. Cf. the same author's *Commentaire Historique sur le Poeme d'Ibnabdoun*, p. 80. Skeat, V, 150.

32. *Op. cit.*, p. 147. Haly devotes two folio pages (148-149) to hyleg, in which he enumerates not only the five places prescribed by Ptolemy (*op. cit.*, pp. 569-572) but in addition something like a dozen other places apt *pro hylech*. Cf. on hyleg and alcocoden Omar, 'Umar ibn Farkhan ('Abu Halfs), *De nativitatibus*, in *Astronomici scriptores*, Basileae, 1533, pp. 120-121; Alchabitius, *op. cit.*, sig. c6r.; Albubather, *op. cit.*, sig. B2 ff.

33. See William Lilly, *An Introduction to Astrology*, p. 24 (aspects); pp. 27-34 (nature of the houses); pp. 57-67 (nature of the signs); p. 69 (dignities); pp. 391, 393, 413, 403 (hyleh); pp. 238-249 (explanation of technical terms).

34. Haly, *op. cit.*, p. 148. The succeeding eight folio pages, filled with technical matter regarding *alcocoden* and with greatly conflicting opinions of wise men, indicate how vexed a question this was in the time of Haly.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

36. It will appear that Luna has just fallen out of quartile aspect with the third face of Cancer. It must be remembered,



however, that the orb of Luna is  $12^{\circ}$ , that is to say, she exerts a powerful immediate influence for six degrees in every direction. If she has not progressed farther than six degrees in Scorpio, therefore, she is still — so far as her influence is concerned — in quartile aspect with Cancer. See Plate VI.

37. *Op. cit.*, sig. B<sub>1</sub> v.

38. *Ibid.*, sig. A<sub>2</sub>.

39. *Idem.*

40. *Idem.* Luna is also considered by some authorities to be the hyleg when situated in the eighth house of the figure, see Haly, *op. cit.*, p. 148; Albubather, *op. cit.*, sig. B<sub>2</sub>.

41. *Ibid.*, sig. B<sub>2</sub>.

42. Or perhaps he is too good a philosopher, as we have already seen in our discussion of the *Knight's Tale*. But in this story he seems to take the religious point of view rather than the philosophical. Wedel, however, finds that Chaucer seems to be an outspoken determinist in astrological matters (*op. cit.*, pp. 143-153), and the scholars to whom he refers in the foot-notes are, for the most part, in agreement. But since these opinions are usually based on astrological references taken as *isolated fragments*, I ask for an unbiased consideration of my point of view based on a treatment of these independent passages as organic.

43. See Wedel, *The Mediaeval Attitude toward Astrology*, pp. 7, 55, 115, 125-7, 145 ff.

44. J. L. Lowes, *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, pp. 67-71.

45. *Cant. Tales*, E, 2218-2320.

## CHAPTER VIII

1. The subject-matter of this and the succeeding chapter was published first in *Englische Studien*, LVIII, pp. 24-60.

2. It may be mentioned that Calkas arrives at his conclusions regarding the fall of Troy through divinations by "sort," by "augurie," and by "astronomye" (IV, 115-17), though he has no vision of any kind. For this kind of thing neither Criseyde nor Pandarus has any patience; Criseyde finds that through the "sort" the gods speak in "amphibologies" and tell twenty lies (IV, 1404-6); and Pandarus is of the opinion that augury from "ravenes qualm, or shryking of thise oules" is the foul and false nonsense of old women (V, 378-82).

3. Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani *Commentariorum in Somnium Scipionis*, lib. I, cap. iii (Teubner).

4. Bernhard Ten Brink, *Chaucer Studien*, etc., p. 101.

5. On the virtues and their functions, see *Somni in omni philosophia viri Constantini Africani*, Basileae, 1539, pp. 81-93; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Lugduni, 1482, fol. b<sub>3</sub> ff.; Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *Opera omnia*, Basileae, 1524, pp. 22 ff.; *Compendium medicinae Gilberti Anglici*, Lugduni, 1510, fol. 184.

6. Avicenna, *Libri Canonis quinque*, Venetiis, 1564, lib. III, fen i, tract. i, cap. 7. This is the Arabian physician, Hussain ibn 'Abd Allah (Abú Alí Al), called Ibn Síná, born in Bokhara in 978 A.D., died 1036, whom Chaucer calls "Avicen" (*C. T.*, A, 431) and whose "canon" and "fen" he mentions without apparently any too great acquaintance with them (*C. T.*, C, 888 ff.). See Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, 394; Antonius Gaizo, *De somno ac eius necessitate*, Basileae, 1539, cap. i. Ex Galeni *Libris De dignotione ex insomniis*, in *Opera*, Venetiis, 1609, IV, 213.

7. *Loc. cit.* For further discussion of sleep and waking, see Aristotle, *De somno et vigilia*, text and commentary in the *Opera omnia* of Thomas Aquinas, Venetiis, 1594, III, fol. 28-34; Vincent de Veauvais, *Speculum naturale*, lib. XXVI, cap. i; Averroes, *Colliget Averrois totam medicinam*, Venetiis, 1542, fol. 51. This last is Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd (Abu Al Walid), an Arabian physician, born at Cordova in A.D. 1126 and called by Chaucer "Averrois" (*C. T.*, A, 433).

8. *Loc. cit.*

9. *Op. cit.*, IV, 213; cf. Gaizo, *op. cit.*, cap. x.

10. Gaizo, *op. cit.*, cap. vii. Cf. also Petri Aponensis *Liber Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum precipueque medicorum appellatus*, dif. CLVII, fol. 202.

11. *Op. cit.*, lib. XXVI, cap. 41. Cf. Turisanus, *Plus quam commentum in parvam Galeni artem*, Venetiis, 1557, p. 53.

12. Gaizo, *op. cit.*, cap. vii; Petrus Aponensis, *op. cit.*, dif. CLVII, fol. 202v.

13. *Op. cit.*, dif. CLVII, fol. 202. He is quoting largely from Avicenna, *Compendium de anima*, Venetiis, 1546, lib. IV. Cf. Aristotle, *De somniis*, in *op. cit.*, III, fol. 35.

14. Petrus Aponensis (de Abano), *op. cit.*, dif. CLVII, fol. 202.

15. Quoted from Petrus de Abano, *idem*. Cf. Thomas Bradwardine, *De Causa Dei*, ed. Savillius, London, 1618, p. 13.

16. This is St. Augustine's commentary upon the *phantasma* of Macrobius, *De spiritu et anima*, cap. xxv. Cf. also Augustine, *Liber de divinatione daemonum*, cap. v; Guido Bonatus, *De astronomia tractatus x*, Basileae, 1550, col. 646; Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, lib. III, cap. li; Haly filius Abenragel, *De iudiciis astrorum*, Basileae, 1551, Pars III, cap. xii.

17. *Op. cit.*, cap. xii, p. 114.

18. *Ibid.*, cap. xiii, p. 115. It must not be forgotten that all the illusions wrought in the *Franklin's Tale* by the Clerk of Orleans are the result of his control over occult powers in some way liberated by his manipulations of the "eighte and twenty manciouns that longen to the mone" (*C. T.*, F, 1130). See Tatlock, "Astrology and Magic in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*," *Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, p. 342.

19. Arnoldus de Villa Nova, *Expositiones visionum quae fiunt in somnia* (in *Opera omnia*, Basileae, 1524, pp. 625 ff.), Pars I, cap. i, ii.

20. *Op. cit.*, lib. XXVI, cap. 63.

21. *Op. cit.*, Pars I, cap. iv.

22. *Ibid.*, Pars II, cap. ii. See Plate V. Second House.

23. St. Augustine, *De spiritu et anima*, cap. 24, 25.

24. Augustine, *De Genesi ad literam*, liber XII, cap. vii.

25. *Op. cit.*, lib. XXVI, cap. 56.

26. *Ibid.*, cap. 61, 74-96. Cf. Augustine, *De spiritu et anima*, cap. 24.

27. *The Second Nun's Tale*, *C. T.*, G, 200-250. This type of vision is, of course, exceedingly common in the lives of saints and in the writings of the Church Fathers.

28. Gregory shows at considerable length just how it was possible for Moses to receive his revelation of divine will without sensuous imagery or thought, *Expositionum*, lib. IV, cap. v, § 8; and Thomas Aquinas devotes one whole chapter to answering affirmatively the question, "Utrum Moyses fuerit excellentior aliis prophetis," *Quaestio XII*, art. xiii, *Opera*, VII, fol. 378.

29. Cornelius Agrippa, *op. cit.*, lib. III, cap. 51.

## CHAPTER IX

1. *Op. cit.*, lib. III, fen i, tract. 4, cap. 18.
2. *Ibid.*, lib. I, fen 2, doc. 3, cap. 7.
3. *Op. cit.*, in *Opera*, Venetiis, 1609, VI, 213.
4. *Almansor* (or *Al-Mansuri*), cap. 204. The quotation is transcribed in Gaizo, *op. cit.*, cap. x. This Rhazes is Abu Bakr Muhammad ben Zakariya, who was born near the middle of the ninth century, studied in Baghdad, and who died A.D. 932. The *Almansor*, was dedicated to Al-Mansur, prince of Khorassan.
5. *Op. cit.*, Pars I, cap. iv.
6. *Op. cit.*, Pars III, cap. xii.
7. *Op. cit.*, dif. CLVII, fol. 202.
8. Avicenna, *op. cit.*, lib. I, fen 2, doc. 3, cap. 7.
9. Pedanii Dioscoridis Anazarbei *De materia medica libri quinque*, ed. Springel in *Opera quae extant*, I: *laurus*, lib. I, cap. 106; *centauria*, cap. 7; *fumaria*, cap. 108; *elleborus*, cap. 149; *euphorbium*, cap. 86; *rhamus*, cap. 119; *hedera helix*, cap. 210. For further quotations from Avicenna, see *Englische Studien*, LVIII, p. 49.
10. *Op. cit.*, lib. IV, fen 1, tract. 1, cap. i.
11. *Ibid.*, lib. IV, fen 1, tract. 2, cap. i.
12. *Ibid.*, lib. IV, fen 1, tract. 2, cap. 35.
13. *Ibid.*, lib. IV, fen 1, tract. 2, cap. 36.
14. *Ibid.*, lib. IV, fen 1, tract. 1, cap. 4.
15. *Op. cit.*, cap. vii. For the sources of the cock's illustrations, see Cicero, *De divinatione*, lib. I, cap. 27; Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum memorabilium libri novem*, lib. 1, cap. vii. Cf. Lounsbury, II, 272.
16. Bradwardine, *op. cit.*, pp. 810-12; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, cap. 14; Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, V, 6; C. F. Brown, "The Author of the Pearl Considered in the Light of his Theological Opinions," *PMLA.*, XIX, 265; H. R. Patch, "Troilus on Predestination," *JEGPh.*, XVII, 399 ff.; Wedel *The Mediaeval Attitude toward Astrology*, pp. 147-149; *Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste*, ed. Bauer, pp. 158-60.
17. *Op. cit.*, p. 811.
18. Sypherd, *Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame*, pp. 1-41.
19. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, p. 68.

20. *Sextum Consulatum Honorii Augusti Praefatio*, 3-10.  
Cf. Lounsbury, II, 257; Skeat, I, 509.

21. F. Tupper, "Chaucer's Lady of the Daisies," *JEGPh.*,  
XXI, pp. 297 ff.

22. *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

24. *Op. cit.*, pp. 296-97. Professor Tupper's theory is correct, but I hold no brief for the "actual ideas, latent dream-material" which he maintains become "dream-content" in this instance.













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